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SOULS RE-MAKE

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embodying the Page
legend for the '90s

BETTIE PAGE

50's *Frotica*

Volume 4 Number 1 (2011)



Femme Fatales



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You won't want to miss our next issue, devoted to Gillian X in which Anderson speaks candidly about her role on the X-FILES and the spin-off that's debuting in May. Plus a review of the movie and videography of Anderson's choice episodes from the series, and a look at her surprising Web site. It's the most consummate coverage ever published on the alluring Anderson.

And also in the same issue, Interviews with DEEP SPACE NINE's Chase Masterson and MURPHY BROWN's Faith Ford on working for a Stephen King saga titled SOMETIMES THEY COME BACK. FOR MORE in the Next Issue Dept. we look at 70s icon Fionnula Lewis, the actress and Brit bombshell who posed for Playboy. Plus an interview with newcomer Olivia Williams on starring opposite Kevin Costner in THE POSTMAN and a profile of VAMPIRE artist Fears, who poses exclusively for you! Subscribe today, and pick up these back issues you may have missed!

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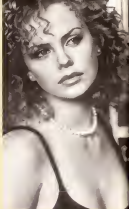
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CHARLIZE THERON

BEDEVILED IN LAST FALL'S SLEEPER,
SHE'S NOW HOTTER THAN HELL.

BY FREDERICK C. SZEBIN



Theron as the wife in *THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE*: "I screen tested a lot of emotional scenes four times—a draining experience that took two months."

...Turning 31 years old, Charlize Theron was cast opposite Al Pacino and Keanu Reeves in *THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE*, last fall's unsung sleeper. The film collected close to \$60 million domestically, outgrossing competition (e.g. *BEAN*, *STARSHIP TROOPERS*) that was launched with months of advance hypebole. Theron, as the wife of a ruthless attorney (Reeves), devolves into madness when her spouse bargains with the Devil, who's camouflaged as lawyer John Milton (Pacino). It's hip *Mephistopheles*.

Though Ms. Theron had only previously performed supportive roles (*TWO DAYS IN THE VALLEY*, *THAT THING YOU DO!*), director Taylor Hackford—after a bit of prodding—finally cast the newcomer "I would throw more and more at Charlize and she kept delivering," Hackford says. "She kept coming back and saying, 'Give me more.' You can find people with talent. The experience isn't there, but the velocity of learning and how much ground she's covered is just astounding."

"She has a tough part," admits Keanu Reeves. "She gets to go 100-000 wacks. And she does it with such understanding of its place in the piece, with authenticity, great conviction and beauty."

Critics concurred. "The one performer who succeeds

in creating a flesh-and-blood victim is Charlize Theron," raved *Entertainment Weekly*. "At first you think she's just bahelicious window dressing—her face is all soft, cherubic curves, with lips as ripe as Monroe's. But as the devil plays his games, her character, left behind by her husband, begins to lose her mind and see visions of the dark side, and Theron, soulful in her terror, convinces you that she's really seeing them."

Theron attributes the credibility of her performance to "falling in love with my character as a being. I remember reading the script and her character description—usually they spend a lot of time on that in a script—was just, 'We meet Mary Ann Lomax, and we love her.' Upon reading the script, I did—indeed!—love her. And I also felt very challenged by the arc of what she goes through in the film. That dark stuff, to me, is always very

challenging, and right up my alley.

"I read with Taylor. He called me back and I read for him again, this time with Keanu. Taylor said, 'Your work is really great, but I think you're too pretty for the part.' This came from him and Warner Brothers. I ended up screen testing for the film four times, screen testing a lot of the very emotional scenes. It was a draining experience that took about two months. But I was very confident for some reason. I felt like there was some weird connection there. I went in very positive every single time, and came back very positive."

Hackford is a director very much entrenched in *The Method*, a dramatic ritual that disciplines the actor into locking themselves into the scripted character, on and off-screen.

Adhering so closely to the tormented wife, Theron declined to remove Mrs. Lomax's wedding band during production. Hackford conspired to make Theron and Lomax inseparable...

"Taylor never called me Charlize," recounts the actress. "He still doesn't. He still calls me and leaves me messages—'Mary Ann-ah!' he calls me. He always called me by my character name. I loved it. He's the kind of director who gives

continued on page 124

Theron and her co-star, Keanu Reeves (l) and Al Pacino, "mated together nicely" while shooting the supernatural hole. "Yet, we all had our own space."



F A T A L E

By LAURA SCHIFF

Kevin Williamson (F7 67), who wrote SCREAM, SCREAM 2, and I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER, told me about a seven-page treatment that he penned for HALLOWEEN PART VII. "I just loved the first one so much," says Hollywood's hottest scribe. "We're going to bring back Jamie Lee Curtis. Whereas the first HALLOWEEN movie was the night Michael Myers came home, Part VII is the night Jamie came home. It's really going to be fun—a confrontation between brother and sister." The script will be written by newsmen Robert Zappia. John Carpenter, who directed the original, is rumored to be returning as well.

Ms. Curtis is also tapped in VIRUS, a techno-thriller produced by Gale Ann Hurd (THE TERMINATOR, ALIENS), scheduled to premiere in April. Abducted by William Baldwin and Donald Sutherland, Curtis learns that an "alien life form" has pegged humanity as "a virus that must be eliminated—and the only way will stop at nothing to complete its genocidal mission." Chills ensue.

Want to add Bette Page's burlesque films to your home video collection? Galt Spice Releases has compressed all of Bette's cinematic sequences into a two-hour laser disc: THE BETTY PAGE COLLECTION, available for a cool \$70, is a compendium of her bump 'n' grind choreography from the feature-length STROPHOMA, WRETCH & TEASERAMA. Special bonus: fetish/bondage/corridor shots—shot in 1966 and 1968—that Bette performed for mail-order customers. To order in the USA, call (818) 294-0625. THE BETTY PAGE COLLECTION is available on video—outside of the US (PAL format only)—by calling the Netherlands at 31-20-6227643.

Got the inside scoop on Stuart Gordon's latest collaboration with director Brian Yuzna (S1 S1) DOWNLOADER, a sci-fi/horror hybrid scheduled for a shoot this spring, involves a female scientist, burdened with a brain tumor, who cheats death by downloading her mind into a robot. "It's very much like a Frankenstein story," says Gordon. "Once she's in this machine, she wants the machine to become more human. She wants her body back, and she keeps having her self rebuilt to try to give herself more and more humanity. She slowly goes out of her mind, and she ends up like a lot of becoming a monster. I like it because it has a lot of heart. This woman has a husband and a child, and she doesn't want to leave them. She's fighting this as hard as she can to somehow stay alive, stay human."

The plum role of the scientist will be cast next month. Meanwhile, Gordon has been talking to renowned fantasy artist Hayme Scaryguy (S12) about the robot's design. Gordon and Yuzna are currently wrapping post-production on their "little green man" tale, PROGENY. Actress Gillian McWhirter plays a young wife who is raped by extraterrestrials and impregnated. Arnold Vosloo (DARKMAN II & III) plays her husband, and Queen Guts pitchman Wilfred Brimley tests his



Fervently cast as the victim in low-budget job (S), DEATH OF A CENTURY, Jamie Lee Curtis turns vanguard in VIRUS (S), a sci-fi shoot-up about debating in the living.

bedside manner as McWhirter's doctor. Says Yuzna, "Some of our alien special effects are amazing and fantastic," says Yuzna. "The monsters are just horrors." PROGENY will debut sometime around May.

A fan club has been organized for Ingrid Pitt. Bit bombast and grind dame of her native country's horror film industry. Pitt is the heroine in a review of Pitt's sterling credits: THE VAMPIRE LOVERS, COUNTS DRACULA, THE HOUSE THAT DRIPPED BLOOD, THE WICKER MAN, etc. Address: Ingrid Pitt Fan Club, P.O. Box 403, Richmond, Surrey TW10 6LR, England. The actress is also offering her own Web site (<http://www.webworld.co.uk/mail/PittFanMail>). "It's largely used to promote the sale of various bits and pieces I have hanging around the bedroom," smiles Pitt. "...discotheque vampire cloaks, the occasional worn-out fang, fading pictures of far-off days. I'd like to alert FF readers that I'm hunting for a film I appeared in 'way back when' called NOBODY ORDERED LOVE. It must have been pretty unrememberable—nobody's seen or loved it."

So why did the Ministry of Film drop

Heather Elizabeth Parkhurst (S14) as the embodiment of London Night's comic book heroine, Tami Gunn? Ladd Vance, a Ministry executive, insists the SHERMAN DAKS series was dismissed because "She changed the color of her hair. She's a brunette, now." Parkhurst had no comment; her replacement is Playboy playmate Barbara Moore, who appeared in AUSTIN POWERS as a Fenist. Vance is currently pecking Tami's Gunn as a syndicated TV show.

Christa Campbell (page 84), who starred as everyone's favorite Dark Angel on El Dimeñamiento's BETTE PAGE FROM PIN-UP TO SEX QUEEN, is shooting RED LETTERS for the aforementioned Ministry of Film. The Showtime movie opens the story of a trendy college professor who is being wooed by an amorous prison escapee. Campbell plays the daughter of a university dean. Balance of the cast includes Timothy Hutton, Robin Wright Penn, and Oliver Platt.

Ulrich Diederich—boonily sedulous cover-eggs and Russ Meyer icon—is oft mentioned in the issue's interviews with not only Meyer but David F. Friedman (sample page 10). A



complete chronicle of her film and magazine appearances is accessible through the Ulrich web site: <http://www.ulrich.com/ulrich.htm>. Congratulations to Peeples for not only his consummate research and construction of the site, but the splendid color photos, including a portrait of "Ulrich today" (gongolously). Lots of red skin supports the privilege which insists that Diederich is probably the most filmed/photographed nude model of all time. "But I thought Bette Page—"

Arriving at newstands this month: Full Metal Carrot, whose publisher/writer Candy Johns describes as "the best Blade Runner comic book yet!" A parody of Stanley Kubrick's FULL METAL JACKET, Carrot is a hysterical depiction of a boot camp for comic convention models. Even though Johns was sacked by Braunstone Comics, her survival is proof positive that the peroxide superheroin is doing just fine on her own, thank you very much! "The idea for Full Metal Carrot," reveals Johns, "came naturally after four years of self-publishing, four years of sporadic abuse, and most of all, watching for four years as the so-called 'real girl' swoon back over the comic book conventions. It's a war

zone!" Tap-in: <http://nampages.ew.com/next/skinned/> for the B&W site.

■ The financially struggling *Blade Runner* also dumped Sandra Chang's full-on, "experiences as hell to produce *Alone*" 'b&b' book, because this is one of the best comic books I've read all year. A combination of *BLADE RUNNER*, *METROPOLIS*, and *BARB WIRE*, the story's central setting is a bleak, Orwellian landscape. Taking away all mental labor, deemed "acceptable" for the social class she was born into, the title character—a beautiful Chinese girl—dreams of becoming an architect. Chang, also the creator/writer/illustrator of *Elvis Comics*' X-rated *Shades*, notes that "Alone" meets up with these rebels who all have a dream of breaking out of their assigned stations in life. They fight against society and the social structure. I think freedom of choice is worth dying for." The youthful talent is currently looking for a new publisher. meantime, check out her reflections of a *Vampire* in *Hustler Comics*' *Chang's web*: <http://www.dizalepot.com/~buccaner>

■ Caught up with novelist Nancy A. Collins, who confirmed that the move rights to her award-winning vampire tale, *Sanguine as After Dark*, have been optioned for a six-figure sum by a Maryland film company. Collins, who also penned the screenplay, says the film "will be based on the novel, rather than being an adaptation of the novel. Right now, Drew Barrymore is expected to play the vampire, Sonya Blue, with her father being played by Christopher Walken. I was told this yesterday, but as you well know, those things change faster than underwear!" Indeed, my sources inside Barrymore's camp were unable to confirm this at press time. Billed as a "dark action adventure"—think of it as *LA FEMME NIKITA* meets *THE CROW*—the film is likely to be directed by Peter "Mik" Tai, who helmed *WICKED CITY*. Games are set to roll in Vancouver in early '96, utilizing many of the *X-FILES* and *MILLENNIUM* sets. The film is expected to make its theatrical debut in autumn, and plans for a sequel are already underway. In addition, Collins is currently writing a screen adaptation of her 'spid web' 'erowful novel, *Walking Wolf*, which she describes as *Dirves* with *Melrovels*.

■ Last month, I gave you Julie Strain's take on her role in the upcoming Mexican flesh-eater flick, *GUNS OF EL CHUPACABRA*. Oscar Dan Jackson further elaborated on the plot: "Julie plays Queen B, and her husband, Kevin Eastman, plays King Alfrede. They live in a fantasy realm, similar to King Arthur's 'kissable' type of heaven." Serving as window dressing in this over-the-top tale are naked "yum-yum" girls plucked into chicken cages by the predatory Chupacabra who—something of an amoral Ju-hi Chid—plans to suck, cook and eat up his white prey. Call me pernick, but why are the film's supportive players—including newcomers "Dino" and "Tyler," and other legends who are served up as the monster's lunch—billed with single-name pseudonyms? GUNS had a very limited theatrical release last December. Two sequels are already in post-production.

Between takes of *BLOODTHIRSTY*, which she describes as a "cool" vampire flick, Strain was photographed for *Cosmo Images*' 72-card series—homage to *Bette Page*—called *Julie*



Julie Strain stars w/ Leslie Dixon (5-1) in *BLOODTHIRSTY*. "It's an actor's life," says Strain. "Jeff Peck, the director, is a genuine *Vampire* & Houdinizing guy-girl screen, what else could you ask for? Maybe a *Pink Panther* & *Fear!*"

Strain's *Bette* 2000. The Amazonian starlet strikes a bawdy of provocative Page poses. "I love *Bette*," explains Strain. "She's been an inspiration for my whole career." A sample of Strain's writing on the flip side of an average card: "Fat Bangers, milk and Chile Relleno get me wet!" I bet Strain plans on sending her muse an *Alka-Seltzer* with those cards.

■ Max Collins' *SPILLANE* documentary sheds some light on noir novelist Mickey Spillane, his gunshoe alter ego Mike Hammer and the demons who populated his books and films, all of whom were developed as archetypal femmes fatales. Topping the list of Spillane's savvy stars is Velda, whose black b&b forgoes shadowed *Bette Page*'s famous loda. "Velda is a licensed private detective who carries weapons in various places, including her belt," says writer/director Collins. "She's a very hard-hitting character in her own right, usually becoming Hammer's partner in the later novels." Spillane continues to have a strong female readership—despite the fact that some people view him as sexist—because people who are really familiar with his work know that the women characters tend to be independent, and have almost a masculine strength. Spillane's women pumped iron long before it was popular."

Velda has been played by a variety of dolls over the decades, including Jacqueline Fontaine, Margaret Sheridan, Madeline Cooper, Betty Thomas, Lindsay Bloom, Pam Anderson and Tanya Roberts. Joining this illustrious clan is

Shannon Wherry, who currently plays Velda on UPN's syndicated *MIKE HAMMER* series. Collins is pushing *SPILLANE* as a vehicle for the Arts & Entertainment network, with a possible theatrical release as well. Watch for related coverage in a future issue. We interviewed Spillane, Shannon Wherry, etc. *Alone* Messy (5-7), the personification of a *Spillane* seen, posed for our spread.

■ Amy Lynn Buxer (*ICYBER-VENGEANCE*, *SKINN* (5-10)) is currently shooting in B&W with AMY LYNN BUXER, an erotic fantasy series for Showtime, HBO, Viewer's Choice and Pay-Per-View. "I'm begging them to change the title," confesses the *Penthouse* Pet of the Year '92. "The show consists of these hour-long vignettes of these ladies leering, B-movie love scenes of simulated sex that cut off at the point of actual sex. It's just the posing and acting stuff." When I pressed Buxer for the actual storylines behind the blockouts, she replied, "It's basically just blatant TSA. It's not like it's trying to have a plot or anything creative like that." Guess, Amy, next time we ask you a question, would you try to be a little more direct?

■ Jacqueline Lovell (*FF 5-7*), the next generation's new breed of B-movie queen, is a top draw on the video market. Mystic Productions hired her for "sexy homage to *REAR WINDOW*" called *SHADES*. "I want people to know that I'm still totally interested in doing nasty in movies, despite what misinformation you may have heard in the past," insists Lovell. "For me to say that I'm not doing nude scenes anymore is completely ridiculous!" Nevertheless, Lovell would prefer that her nudity be linked with "fleshed-out characters." Notes Kevin Summerville, director of Lovell's next project, *EDGAR ALLAN POE'S MASQUE*, "Jacqueline thought the script was so substantive, she volunteered to play two of the characters." Lovell is "reluctant to disclose the plot of the picture. But I'm really looking forward to it to shooting it this month."

■ Eileen Oely (5-8), Britain's reigning video vixen, governs a tribe of beautiful blood parasites in *WITCHCRAFT: MISTRESS OF THE CRAFT*. The actress, directed by Elise Cramer, portrays "Raven" and it's of the most enjoyable roles I've played to date. She is a cool, dark, caring-with-accuracy, no-nonsense kind of vampire. "Only, who also starred in *RAZOR BLADE SMILE* and *PERVERELLA*, has posted a lush web site (see address on Letters page)."

■ Actress Raelyn Saelman (*ATTACK OF THE 50 FOOT CENTERFOLD*) has made her best scenes during the past two years, but is back in a new mold. "I have a 10-year-old daughter, and it just bothered me that there was so much nudity in my work," explains Saelman. "I almost got my big break in Rodney Diergenfeld's *MEET WALLY SPARKS*, but I didn't get the part. I thought I was finally going to get my SAG card and be moving out of these non-union independent films, but it didn't happen. Then the next week, my agent was sending me back out on an audition for a topless scene. I just couldn't live with any more." Saelman fired her agent and created Global Media Concepts, a "website design firm" which she owns with partner Vic Petrakis. Her own web site (<http://www.raelyn.com>)—an interactive feast for the senses—features "a sexy but consequential image. We're working on a sci-fi heroine." Jack in and give it a gender. □



7. **ASHLEY JUDD**, whose hit profile triggered an avalanche of mail, is hottest of our forthcoming Mickey Spillane borrowings. 8. **GUNS OF EL CHUPACABRA**, director Gus Jackson's "conceivables" monster that feasts on rubble, reared starlets' roses includes Tyler and Dee (9). It also captivates delirious Dierdra (1).



CARNIVAL OF SOULS

MUSINGS ON THE REMAKE & REAL-LIFE HORRORS.

BY MITCH PERSONS

Bear with me, trivial pursuers. Flashback to the *LOST IN SPACE* television series (1965-68). Never mind Robot, Smith or the Robinsons; rekindle your memory of "The Green Lady" (Vilma Marcus), a lascivious, cabbage-colored extraterrestrial who landed in random episodes. I pretty much exiled the alien to memory until I chatted with Anna Kristin "Krissey" McKown, who's featured in Trimark Pictures' *CARNIVAL OF SOULS* remake. Although the color of McKown's skin isn't green, one gets the impression that she's quite at home with the emerald hue. She's clad in a hunter-green sweater and slacks outfit, and the ensemble emphasizes the luminosity of her eyes, the color of which can only be described as chartreuse.

Unlike the *The Green Lady*, Ms. McKown is decidedly Home sapiens: born in Charleston, South Carolina, she communicates with the same seductive drawl as *SOULS* co-star Bobbie Phillips: "Yes, I'm a southern girl," McKown smiles. "And I had being an actress ingrained in me from the time I was five years old. My Grandma Nadine kept telling me, 'Oh Krissey, you can do it, you can do it!' I was in a lot of local theater. I played such parts as Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* and Minnie Fay in *Hello, Dolly!* As recently as last year, I did *Side by Side* by Sundheim at the Piccolo Spoleto Festival. My first film was *SCARLETT*, a 1994 miniseries which was the sequel to 1939's *GONE WITH THE WIND*. Part of that movie was filmed in Charleston.

"One day, a friend of mine called me up and said, 'Do you want to do some work in *SCARLETT*?' Well, what

Southern girl doesn't love *GONE WITH THE WIND*? I started out as an extra, then was given a part as one of Scarlett's cousins. I had two scenes with Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, who played Scarlett. She was really fun to work with.

"After *SCARLETT*, I did a film called *CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE* and then *SUMMERTIME SWITCH*, where I played a very flirtatious secretary. By this time, I had managed to finish four years of study at the College of Charleston. Since I was still young, I had some thoughts about becoming an attorney as well as an actress. But the bug had really bitten me, so I said, 'I'm going to move to L.A. and try acting on a larger scale.'"

McKown was cast in last year's *CLUB VAMPIRE* (R) co-produced by Roger Carman, the film was helmed by screenwriter Andy Ruben (*POISON IVY*) who made his debut as director. "The film is exactly what it sounds like," grins McKown. "It's about a club of vampires. It was a comedy/drama—a 'thramedy,' I guess people call it—and I played a young victim who got kind of suckered into joining the group. The people in the club liked my character because I didn't have any preconceived notions about vampires. I just wanted to be where everybody liked me, so they brought me into the fold. But I wind-up getting killed! About mid-way through the film, they slashed my wrists and all my blood was sucked out. I must say, it was an interesting way to die.

"After *CLUB VAMPIRE*, I did *CRIMINAL INTENT*, which should be out sometime this year. And now, of course, I'm doing *CARNIVAL OF SOULS*. This is a very exciting shoot for me, since I play the third female lead, right after Bobbie Phillips who



Anna K. McKown: "I usually play a girl about 18 or 19 years old. *CARNIVAL OF SOULS* is a challenge. I'm older. I play a thirty-ish woman with two small girls."



ANNA K. MCKOWN

"CLUB VAMPIRE is a 'dramedy.' I play a young victim who gets suckered into joining 'the group.'"

plays Alex Grant, and Shawnee Smith who plays Alex's sister, Sandra.

The original *CARNIVAL OF SOULS* (1962), directed by the late Hark Henry, involves the final mortal odyssey of Mary Harvey, though she perished in a fatal accident, her soul hasn't crossed over to "the other side." Walking among living, Mary is haunted by ghosts who prompt her very reluctant retreat into the afterlife. There's no allusion to Mary's parents other than a brief line of dialogue.

But McKown discloses the '97 remake affords the central character an entire family, replete with a history and screen viability: "I'm in a flashback sequence where I play Elaine, a thirtyish widow who's the mother of Alex and Sandra. She runs an inn called the Mermaid Bar. One day, she meets a man named Louis, played by Larry Miller, who really bowls her over. Elaine is very impressed by the fact that Louis likes and wants to be around her kids, because most of the men she's tried to have a relationship with just don't want anything to do with her children. At first, Louis is very nice to Elaine, then he starts to

As "This is *CARNIVAL*'s flashback scenes," says Anna K. McKown: "My character meets a nice man who turns murderous." *By McKown closing on set.*



ANNA K. MCKOWN

"I'll do my part to be sure the Holocaust will never again happen. Forget about it? *That's scary.*"

get rude and mean and, finally, murderous. The last flashback scene in the movie is the tragic ending of Elaine's life, which Alex witnesses.

"One of the reasons I was so excited to get this particular part is that I usually play a girl about 18 or 19 years old. In this film, I'm older, and I'm a mother. Playing Elaine has given me a chance to show that side of me which, under any other circumstances, I might not be able to do for another ten years.

"The biggest challenge for me, in playing a mother, is the fact that I don't have any children of my own in real life. However, I do have younger twin sisters, so growing up there was a lot of 'big sister, little sister' stuff. I also have nieces, and a lot of friends with small children. I brought my observations of these little ones into my characterization.

"I really do think that observation is a crucial part of acting. If an actor is really concerned with playing his or her part well, they have a tendency to observe others. Sometimes, I'll go to a mall or to an airport, and just sit there and watch people—people with their kids, couples with each other, just to get a feel about the different kinds of interactions."

Lila: McKown was cast in the *GAMMELL* remake as Elaine, manager of an inn called The Mermaid Bar; a character not in the '92 original



Now, I had intended to parallel the original, 35-year-old CARNIVAL OF SOULS with this year's incarnation produced by Wim Wenders. Needed some input from McKown, but her enthusiasm for histrionics is so contagious, I toss my notes and say something really true like, "Well, with your research and everything, I guess you're into this acting schtick for the long haul." Can you believe it? And she says—

"That's true! Take my reaction to playing Elaine. The role is very, very complex, and one that clung to me even at the end of the shooting day. Last week, Larry Miller and I were talking and he said, 'You know, what you're doing with Elaine is what I like to call freeway acting.' According to Larry, freeway acting is when you leave the set, and you're driving home, and everything you did that day runs through your mind: 'Okay, would she really do that, or why weren't her emotions stronger or shouldn't she have been less intense at that point?'"

"There was one scene I did with Larry that was unbelievably harrowing. My freeway acting got me into such a state that, when I got home, I couldn't fall asleep for over two hours. What was so powerful about the scene was that it was about aggression, something that could happen any day of the week to any woman in the world. You read about things like that, and sometimes you even witness them, but I think this segment really bit home because I was the one involved in it. For me, it was as real as it could have been without being the actual thing."

"The hard time I had was lessened somewhat by being around Adam Grossman. He's the director and writer of CARNIVAL OF SOULS. With some directors, if a scene isn't going just right—or if someone comes to them with a pesky production problem, even though it may have nothing to do with the actors—the director takes it out on them. Adam is not like that; no matter how pressured he gets, he never turns on you. He's also very sensitive to actors—empathetic and willing to listen. I wish more people in this business were like him. There are a lot of directors and other actors, who are just doing this for the glamour, the fame or the money. They don't really care how they treat other people."

"One person who thinks very much like Adam is Wendy Crewson, who acted with me in CRIMINAL INTENT and also played Harrison Ford's wife in AIR FORCE ONE. She's amazing, she's down-to-earth and treats everyone with respect. I look at her, at all



Carnies of CARNIVAL OF SOULS: (l-r) Larry Miller (as Louis, a Regulator), Regard Reddick, Tiffani Taylor and Anna K. McKown. "The last flashback scene is the tragic ending of my character's life," says McKown.

her successes, at how well-liked she is in Hollywood and I say, 'That's who I want to be like and how I want to be.'"

"Another person who impresses me is Liam Neeson, although I don't know him personally. I thought he was amazing in SCHINDLER'S LIST, which was a very moving film for me. I saw it for the first time in Paris. I was visiting a friend of mine, and we went to go see—as she called it—LA LISTE DE SCHINDLER. I sobbed throughout the majority of the movie. Later, when I saw it back in the States, I sobbed equally as hard."

"I think one of the reasons I was so moved by the Spielberg's movie is that I came from a partial Jewish background. There's Southern Baptist Christian on my father's side, but Jewish on my mother's side. I was always deeply involved in the Jewish community, even in Charleston. I worked on the committee to 'Erect a Holocaust Memorial' there. Our groundbreaking should be in another few months, and I'll be flying back for that. The memorial will have the Eternal Flame burning, and there will also be a series of plaques. If you live in Charleston, and had a relative who died in the camps, the relative's name goes on the plaque."

"A memorial like that may have been in Steven Spielberg's mind when he said to the teachers of the world, 'Teachers, I implore you: we can't let the children forget.' That is so important, not only with the war and that

period of time but with everything. A lot of people say, 'Okay, let's just forget about it and move on.' I mean, you can move on... but to forget about it? That's scary, because then it could happen again, and the thought of that is just too terrible to indulge."

"I want to do my part to make sure that something like the Holocaust never happens again. I've always loved the law and the fight for justice. Eventually, I want to return to school and become an attorney, maybe even run for a public office. But I'm deeply involved in acting. Really, love it. Right now, that's where my heart is."

McKown certainly has her introspective side. So let's talk BAYWATCH: one suspects this series would be a professional pothole for a "freeway acting" thespian, right? Not McKown: "If all goes well, I'll be doing an episode this next season. That would be great exposure for me, because that show is seen everywhere. The other day, somebody made a joke and said, 'Even the kids in Ethiopia watch that show!' After that, I'd like to return to the stage and do a Broadway show. There's only one problem: it's three thousand miles away. In New York, like here, auditions come out daily on the breakdowns, so you have to be there in order to work there. [pauses] But, then again, when I was slaving over my textbooks at the College of Charleston, who knew I would be on a soundstage in Southern California, playing a 26-year-old widow with two kids?" □

'50s Legend

RUSS MEYER

THE AUTEUR FILMMAKER, WHO BROADENED NUDIE-CUTIES INTO A TITULAR INDUSTRY, ON THE MARKETING OF WOMEN.

By DAN SCAPPEROTTI

Pushing 76, he's as feisty, unabashed and candid as ever. Tells it the way *he* sees it. Not one to pull a punch, the veteran filmmaker is the stuff legends are made of. Some insist he even pioneered the auteur theory of filmmaking; after all, corporate Hollywood—even during the '60s crossover from the previous decade's naivete—would never have bronched the likes of *THE NAKED CAMERA*, *LORNA, EUROPE IN THE RAW* or *EVE & THE HANDYMAN*. Bottom line: when it's written, edited, produced and directed by Meyer, the last thing you'll experience is indifference. And you'll see breasts. Tons o' big, voluminous breasts. We're talking dairy farm.

The man who turned mammary fetishism into a personal trademark launched his career by training as a combat cameraman. "I was in World War II," said Meyer. "It was great. I loved the war. I didn't want the war to end. I wanted it to go on and on and on and on. I shot a lot of pictures, newsreel stuff. I saw a documentary last night which I liked very much called D-DAY



Meyer launched his career by filming Douglas Sirk's wartime routines for *FRENCH PEEP SHOW*, at 76, he's still "filming videos of big, big-filled women." Facing: Photographing life with Eve Meyer (1950-77), *EVE & THE HANDYMAN*

and I had participated in it. There was something about it that said, 'Here's something that you did that was important.'

"For whatever reason—I don't know—but there are very few pictures of General Patton. As a cameraman, I rarely ran into him. When the war had been completed in Europe, and we were getting ready to go over to Japan, I got a call to go down to Third Army Headquarters and take some pictures of Patton. Now my officer, a nice guy—but terrified of anybody with more rank—said, 'I can't go over and report to the General.' I asked him 'Why not?' Damn it, you're a lieutenant.' He said 'I'm scared shitless. I couldn't do it. You're going to have to do it.' So I went over. I was certainly moved by his presence, no question about it. My job was to shoot a lot of pictures of Patton using binoculars and things of that nature and showing his weapon, he was always carrying a .45 caliber pistol or something."

Gauging his own war footage, which had been edited into the documentary, Meyer proclaimed, "I did something pretty good there. I didn't see any other pictures of Patton but about



ten cuts of Patton were mine. I did something in a significant way that was important. It created something of importance for the old cut. He was, in many ways, despoiled...and was, in other ways, built a great deal in high regard. So I did it. I shot those pictures.

"I remember when Patton asked me, 'Who's that guy cowering over at the edge of the field there?' I told him that was my lieutenant and he just kind of laughed. He enjoyed the fact that he could terrorize junior officers—not the GIs—but he was pretty rough on the officers."

The war not only honed Meyer's filmmaking apprenticeship, but initiated him into an entirely different service. All thanks to legendary writer, Ernest Hemingway. Meyer admits that, at age 20, he was still a virgin. But that changed in a small French town. Meyer and three other GIs were attached to the Second French Armored Division as the Germans retreated from Paris. To save the city from the ravages of battle, the French gave the retreating Germans a wide berth. As Meyer and his comrades pulled up to a hotel, Hemingway—one of the guests—invited the Yanks to the bar for a drink. The next day, the acries negotiated exclusivity of a brothel, with the local madam, for the visiting Americans.

When Japan was defeated in 1945, Meyer reluctantly turned into a civilian. Plying his trade stateside, he snagged a job making industrial films. It wasn't long before Meyer nurtured a compulsion to make feature-length films. But he needed capital. His infatuation with a celebrated stripper, Tempest Storm—actually, Meyer was impassioned with her ample chest—wrought the rewards. Photographing the burlesque star, he sold the resultant pictures to girls magazines.

"Later, I met [theatre manager/promoter] Pete DeCensie through Tempest

RUSS MEYER

"I loved the war. It was great. I didn't want the war to end, I wanted it to go on and on. I shot a lot of newsreel stuff. I got a call to go to headquarters and take pictures of General Patton."



1. THE BEMORAL MR. TEAS (1946). This character endorses women with his Kinky Vision. In this Meyer & Anthony James Ryan as EVE & THE HANDYMAN (1946). Eve: "My mind reeled like a hot rod along the drag strip of inspiration."



Storm," recounted Meyer. "He persuaded me to do a movie of Tempest's burlesque show. I used the technique of industrial filmmaking—the better to see the product, my dear—and it worked." Borrowing camera equipment from a Standard Oil shoot, Meyer spent three nights at DeCensie's theater filming Storm, and other strippers on the venue, bumping n' grinding. The acts filled the running time of a spy tour de force marketed as FRENCH PEEP SHOW.

But cost constrictions initially prohibited the printing of Meyer's raw stock. DeCensie, however, resolved the issue with the splash of Sgt. Bulka. He handed the undeveloped film to a beautiful woman named Susy, who surreptitiously visited the Kodak plant during the late shift: only one man was on duty. "And she would give him the film," said Meyer, "and then she'd be down on the floor on Eastman Kodak's linoleum while she took his load. He handed her the developed film and she would deliver the film to DeCensie. That's how the film was processed."

"Without the girl's ability to satisfy the Eastman Kodak man, this would not have occurred—it wouldn't have been processed. Nudity and become became feasible in FRENCH PEEP SHOW simply because spectacular Susy, this young French girl, took the seed from the Eastman Kodak man and was able to get film developed, film which could only be processed by Kodak. Without Susy, God knows if we would ever have gotten into nudity until 15 years later. She played a big, big role."

Meyer's cameras were perpetually rolling during the '50s and his photographs surfaced in a profusion of nude magazines. Then there was his alliance with Playboy. Editor Hugh Hefner ignited the centerfold trend in December, '53; but it wasn't until Meyer photographed his wife Eve, for a June '55



The late Eve Meyer (36-28-35) measured-up to her ex-husband's physical criteria. Photographed as Playboy's June, 1988 centerfold, she functioned as Russ Meyer's associate producer (KICKS, LORAIN) and producer.

spread, that a centerfold was specifically tailored for the magazine (almost 20 years later, he shot later spouse, Edy Williams, for a *Playboy* pictorial).

Meyer's relationship with DeCesie was the catalyst for his first commercial hit, *THE IMMORAL MR. TEAS* (1959). The filmmaker, determined to compete with pretentious titillation that had been imported for "art" houses, insisted on giving the public what is wanted: rampant, uncensored nudity. Adapting his own screenplay (also titled *MR. TEAS & HIS PLAYTHINGS* and *STREAM HEAT*), Meyer shot a color chronicle of one Mr. Teas (Bill Teas), an ordinary Joe who happens to be endowed with X-ray vision. Naturally, the title character indulges his voyeurism

RUSS MEYER

"Uschi Digard is one of the most aggressive sex partners anyone could hope to find. Everything was real. Her life was devoted to screwing. Marvelous. We need more women like that."



Teas, Uschi Digard in *SUPERVIXENS*. "We had a great live affair during the reverse of the film," recalls Meyer. "Whenever Uschi worked with me, she'd prepare her body for me every night." *As outspoken Meyer rants off, 1987*



by—yes—undressing women with his eyes. This \$24,000 production was the precursor to a then-provocative genre called the "nudie-cutie": plenty of bared breasts were on the menu, but sexual encounters were taboo.

The outspoken Meyer laughs at historians who translate his films into social profundity: "All of my films are cartoons! That's more than anything else I can say about my films. Corcoran, fleshed-out characters. I like *VIXEN* (1968) because it grossed \$37 million. That's a lot of asses on the seats. That's what it's all about. Money. How much money can you make, Meyer! Get all the money you can because it's going to say

to you, you've done something and got their attention. It's not for art or anything of that nature. A lot of people look at my films in a way that is terribly artistic. If they choose to, it's fine."

First and foremost a photographer, Meyer seems most content when he looks himself behind a camera lens. He pegs "script prepa-

ration" as his least favorite phase of the filmmaking process. "I don't care to write. I get an idea and just write it on the back of a laundry ticket like W.C. Fields used to do. I write out things and have to make a reference to it. I don't sit down in some place where I'm going to write a whole script. The script is literally

written afterwards, because so much of my scripts have narration. It works."

The director has a penchant for casting Germans in his later, more sexually surreal films like such as *UPI* (1976) and *SUPERVIXENS* (1975). Meyer hired actor Henry Rowland to play Martin Bormann, Nazi gas station owner, in the latter film. "I always put the Germans up as being real assholes, and people who are kind of dumb and not with it all," noted the WWII vet. "It's something that I can point fun at. I'm of German extraction, I make a lot of money in Germany and they find my films to be humorous. They like all that put-on, that send up."

Meyer's film *ID*, however, is not political lampoon but women who physically caricature the male fantasy of "voluptuous." His starlets anatomically makes silicone coverings, like Pamela Lee Anderson, look like toothpicks. It's a titty tableaux that's more silly—even baroque—than sexy. "I look for breasts," understates Meyer. "That's the most important thing. I find a girl who has big boobs and pretty, and that's what I'm involved with. That's what the whole film is about. When dealing with women, they have to be outrageously beautiful. No, there are no casting things. I just hear about it, know about it, find out about it. That's it. I really go after them. I want to find them and I will find them."

You'd think the rash of cosmetic surgery and artificial implants would prove anathema to Meyer's ideology. But he's very, um, broad-minded. "Oh we like the fake breasts," Meyer quickly injected, like a man who had just discovered nirvana. "Oh, wonderful. Good Lord, yes! I think it's marvelous. These girls are defying gravity, they all have big, beautiful upthrust breasts that will last on and on and on. I'll tell you, I got my dick up so fast with a girl with big arched breasts. You get me a girl with a big pair of breasts,



Blue-eyed Eve Meyer served as associate producer of her ex-spouse's cult classic, **BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS**. Jane Wollman, who did a cameo in **IMMORAL MR. TEAG**, notes, "Rene & I've were in love in the late '60s."

A woman with long, dark, wavy hair is lying on her side on a sandy beach. She is wearing a gold-colored bikini top and bottom. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background shows the ocean and a clear sky.

Eily Wessman: "God really gave me something. So why should I cover any of it up?" But she refused to pose for three-hundred Meyer's SEVEN MINUTES. The marriage lasted-up when he refused Eily a role in SUPERVISENS.

SUPERVISENS demonstrated Meyer's preference for "wrought-iron beds because they remind me of whore houses. I always like to shoot through the springs, but the girls didn't like it 'cause they get spring rings on their asses & chests."

A woman with blonde hair is hanging from a metal spring. She is wearing a pink outfit. The background is a solid pink color.

that have been nurtured with some sort of substance inside, and I'm happy. I don't mean that you should flood the breasts with that stuff, but they can put sacks in there so when they're sixty they'll still have great tits."

The most popular of Meyer's busty ingenues were inevitably rendered into his poster and presskit images: Ericc Gavin, Eve Meyer, Utschi Digard, Kitten Natividad, Sheri Euhank, Haji and a host of others. "There was one girl that I enjoyed very much," sighed Meyer. "Her name was Melissa Mounds. She's a very good stripper and has really remarkable, gravity-defying breasts. There are so many girls that I've worked with and wives. Everybody I've chosen has been 'overbuilt.'"

He professes a similar fondness for the aforementioned Utschi Digard, who

appeared in CHERRY, HARVEY & RAQUEL, SUPERVIXENS and BENEATH THE VALLEY OF THE ULTRAVIXENS for Meyer and freelanced in the likes of THE TOY BOX, ILSA-SHE WOLF OF THE 88 and TRUCK STOP WOMEN.

"Uschi's a girl of Swiss descent, with a slight German accent, and we had a great love affair during the course of the films," said Meyer. "She speaks six languages. Whenever she worked with me, or if she was my aide, she would prepare her body for me every night: it was always ready for whatever."

"If we were out in the desert or someplace, Uschi would always have a blanket and she'd open up that great pussy and you'd really wet away at it. A marvelous girl and she's still a great friend. A great friend." When Meyer's mother eroded into invalidism, Digard bicycled over to the elderly woman's residence to bathe and care for her. "Every thing was read about Uschi," continues Meyer. "She actually wanted to be screwing, even when only her facial features—not her 'nether regions'—were visible in a shot. Uschi Digard is one of the most aggressive sex partners anyone could hope to find. Her whole life was devoted to screwing. Marvellous. We need more women like that."

Jiggling a 44" chest, Francesca "Kitten" Natividad was physically compliant with Meyer's mammary criterion. The producer/director cast the top heavy starlet both in UP! and BENEATH THE VALLEY OF THE ULTRAVIXENS. "Kitten was probably the girl I should have married at one time," mumbled Meyer. "She was awesome in construction, and she was the kind of lady who was ever ready to fuck...and ever ready to have her breasts manipulated, realizing right off the bat that that dick of yours would be like a rock. She's okay. I'm afraid she's eaten too much Mexican food that's put too much weight

RUSS MEYER

"All of my films are cartoons. Fleshed-out characters. I like VIXEN because it grossed \$27 million. That's a lot of asses on the seats. That's what it's about. How much money you make."



Two films helmed by Meyer in '64: Lorne Michael, as LORNA P. ("Too much for one man"), was also in Meyer's MUDDAHEAD and MONDO TOPLESS. At William Hopkins (3) above: Linda Hamilton as FANNY HILL, co-directed by Al Dargatzidis.



on her. I'm sorry to see that, but we're friends."

Cast in SUPERVIXENS, Shari Eubank played dual roles: headstun and electrocuted by a psychotic cop, her heroine is resurrected as an unchaste heavenly body who operates a gas station cafe. "Shari is a very bright woman who inherited over a million dollars from her grandmother," explained Meyer. "Her father didn't like the fact that she was working for me. But I went

into a theatre in Chicago with her, and we were seated with her father and he liked the movie. He didn't come out and want to tar and feather me or anything of that nature. She is a great looking lady. She also had that whole ability to project sex."

The filmmaker's profile of ex-wife Ed Williams is less laudatory but not unflattering. Ironically, the starlet was a fine figure of a woman but not stacked with a sur-

feit of cleavage. Williams, who had played decorative roles in drive-in fodder like I SAILED TO TAHITI WITH AN ALL GIRL CREW, was cast in Meyer's mainstream hit, BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS (1970). One year later, Williams and Meyer were scheduled to renew their collaboration in THE SEVEN MINUTES. But the ingenue contracted a new agent who insisted her stardom was imminent, but only if she could be dissuaded from performing any more nude scenes. Williams passed on the edict to her husband: she declined to disrobe for THE SEVEN MINUTES. Meyer was promptly on the horn with studio prez, Darryl F. Zanuck, who pretty much advised the producer/director to make up his own mind. And Meyer did: he hired another actress.

"I went home and Edy was sitting there smug as can be, with a smile on her face," said Meyer through a wry grin. "And I said, 'I fired you. You're not going to be used in the film. We're using another girl.' I ducked a couple of times and then she begged me to put her in the film. She said she'd do anything."

Their marital union collapsed when Meyer denied Williams a role in SUPERVIXENS. "It crushed my marriage," he said. "Although she was an attractive girl, she didn't have really big tits...although that's not a very good reason for taking your wife and getting her aside." One reason that Meyer ejected his then-spouse from the movie was a dispute over the dialogue. It seems that Williams objected to the surplus of lines written for character actor Charles Napier, who played a pivotal character. "Well I don't want that," Williams told her husband. "Everybody will be looking at him. I have a beautiful body, who wants to be looking at him?" Not long after, the couple soon parted company.

But before we exited Ms. Williams only to flashback,

I queried Meyer about his brief tenure on a major studio lot. Pulitzer Prize-winner Roger Ebert wrote the screenplays for two of Meyer's movies, *BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE ULTRAVIOLETS* and *BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS*. The latter film, produced for 20th Century Fox on a budget of less than \$1 million, grossed \$9 million in the U.S. I asked Meyer for an abridged history of the film and his association with Ebert...

It seems the aforementioned Darryl Zanuck, Fox honcho, engaged Meyer to helm the film after screening the director's raunchy '68 release, *VIXEN*, at a 42nd St. grindhouse. Zanuck's son, Richard, offered Meyer a \$5,000 check to write a treatment for a sequel to the studio's very profitable *VALLEY OF THE DOLLS*. "I sent the check to Ebert and he wrote the treatment," said Meyer. "They liked the treatment and when I got out of that office, I had a contract. Ebert has made some important contributions. Ebert is very much into tits just as I am. In fact, when he worked with me at Fox, we were able to get him in the right groove with wonderful girls from casting, where they'd sit on his face and have a good time. Ebert worked for me on three

RUSS MEYER

"I look for breasts. That's the most important thing. I find a pretty girl who has big boobs. That's what my film is about. When dealing with women, they have to be outrageously buxom."



Lorne Malver as "Clara Belle" in *MURDERY* ("... leaves a trail of evil"). The '65 release is apparently *filmed ROPE*. Meyer cameos as dad in *tychling crowd*.



Cast of *MOTOR PSYCHO* (66) included Heidi, who surfaced in four more Meyer movies. An Elve Production, the film was associated produced by Ely Meyer.



Tara Sotona (42), star of *FASTER, PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL!*, queried, "What do you want from my character, Russ? Gutter, baby?" Meyer smirk, "All you got."

films. He wanted three things: screenwriter's money, some really good liquor and, at the end of filming, he wanted a big blonde."

VIXEN, the film that caught the senior Zanuck's attention, involves a trash pilot who ferries customers to his vacation resort within Canada's north woods. Meyer discovered Erica Gavin, whom he cast as the pilot's promiscuous wife, in the same L.A. strip club where he became acquainted with Tura Sotona (*FASTER PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL!*, FF 4-2).

Gavin's character, Vixen Palmer, is embroiled with Communists, racial conflicts and enough wham-bam sexual bacchanalia to almost uncompromisingly bag for the film's X-rating. "This is the film that put Meyer on Easy Street," laughed the filmmaker, "and let me make other pictures like *CHERRY, HARRY AND RAQUEL*. Erica Gavin was probably the most sensual, straightaway actress that I've ever used in a film. Of course, I've had others like Kitten Natividad who were comedic; but Erica really meant what she was doing. That's one of the reasons I think the film did as well as it did, because I think the audience really felt they were getting 'wrong out' as it were. Great eyes, weird eyebrows. Good tits. She had a carnal quality..."

"I wanted a girl to come on like the Supershef. Totally in charge, greedy, wanting anybody that she wishes and to cheat on her husband. It's the great American dream to run into a woman like that; with no principles whatsoever. And a greedy pussy."

Meyer is adverse to mixing business and sex on a shoot ("I'm afraid that somebody's going to have an unpleasant confrontation."). However, he afforded his ironclad rule some latitude on *VIXEN*'s locales. A stunning redhead named Vincenza Wallace was residing in a house rented for the production. Admitting that





Eve Turner initially declined to pose for her boyfriend, Russ Meyer. She eventually relented and, "five months after her first pose," married the photographer (this photo of the former Ms. Turner is a sample of work with her husband).

"Roger Ebert is very much into tits, just as I am. When he worked with me at Fox, we'd get him in the right groove with wonderful girls from casting, where they'd sit on his face."



which unyieldingly transgressed "off limits" territory (incest, lesbianism, etc), provoked a profitable controversy. Furthering their political agendas, civic committees and one tenuous senator very demonstratively protested the "dirty" movie. "In my time, I was arrested several times," said Meyer. "Charles Keating did everything he could do to put me in the iron hotel. I had a guy named Elmer Gerts who ran up against that whole 'citizens for decent literature' group. He couldn't crack through, but he did manage to keep me out of prison. He was a marvelous lawyer." But Meyer's freedom from jail cost him \$3 million in legal expenses. "Keating was really intent on getting me into the slammer," Meyer continued. "Now, people remember him as the guy who was cheating old women out of their savings. He ran off with all the money from the savings and loans. He's still in prison. When he was booked there, someone took

a picture of him and the district attorney. I bought a print of it for a hundred dollars. It will be in my book."

The filmmaker habitually limits his crew to a "five man staff," a holdover technique from Meyer's "industrial film" tenure. Circumventing corporate extravagance, the crew would frequently pull double duty as extras in film extras. Meyer was usually preoccupied with each love scene's choreography along with his preferred props, brass and wrought iron beds, he digs the squeaking noises that communicate carnal pleasure. One of his signature set-ups is filming an actress on a bed of springs as the camera lens can serve as a surrogate mattress.

"I always like to shoot up through the springs of the bed," said Meyer while toying with a lighter. "The girls didn't like it very much because they got all kinds of spring rings on their asses and their cheeks. I always liked wrought iron beds because they reminded me of whore houses."

Deserts and rural locales are Meyer country. Never bothering to apply for permits, the filmmaker shot wherever he damn well pleased. If someone were to query why he was shooting their house or trailer, Meyer claimed he was cranking out an industrial film. And then he'd slip 'em \$25.00. And Meyer traditionally loaded a portable telephone booth in the back of a staff truck, just in case he needed a pick-up shot of someone phoning in the plot. "We'd just deposit the booth somewhere on the road," he exhaled through a ring of smoke. "Unlike porno films, which are generally inside

7. Karen Petickid ("The girl I should have married") in *BENEATH THE VALLEY OF THE ULTRAVIOLETS*; 8. Erica Gales ("My most sensual actress") in *VIXEN*.

her presence prompted him to feel "a little horny," Meyer coerced Wallace to share a bed with him, vowing to reciprocate by casting her in the movie; hence, the red-head nailed the "Janet King" role. "But she was a problem later on," grouched Meyer, "because she didn't want to romp through the redwoods and get her feet all cut up. It's always better not to fool around with the ladies. We're friends today and we laugh about it. She runs a boutique in Hollywood."

VIXEN's raw sexuality,

Meyer's *GOOD MORNING, AND GOODBYE* (16). Aline Court's choice dialogue as Angel. "You read the profit & loss statements like a volume, and you play the stock market like a fox, but you share your nuts away like a squirrel."





Eve Meyer, photographed by then husband Russ, was promoted as "sexational, blondatious." She hosted a TV show in San Francisco. Tragically, Meyer perished in a Canary Island plane crash (March 27, 1977).

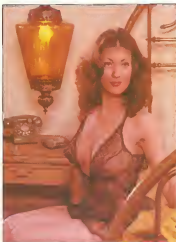
because its convenient, I'm always—by and large—outside. The gals have to lay down in the hammocks and get their asses scratched. They think that that's a little coarse, but I like the whole idea of getting out there with Mother Nature."

He thematically shifted into CHERRY, HARRY AND RAQUEL, and I sermonized on its desert milieu turning into an intoxicant for repressed sex n' violence, yadda. Meyer drolly noted that, aside from sand and an arid environment, the only other thing that CHERRY and SUPERVIXENS had in common was actor Charles Napier. He played a crooked cop, named Harry, in both movies. "I like crooked cops in the films," said Meyer. "That's how Charles Napier got his chance. He had more teeth than Burt Lancaster. Instead of becoming more of an actor, he became less of an actor over the years."

Even Meyer's most devoted aficionados can't stomach the sadism in a SUPERVIXENS scene where Napier hunts, stalks, stomps and electrocutes Shari Sabank. "That scene and Kitten Na-

RUSS MEYER

"I was arrested several times. Senator Charles Keating was really intent on getting me into the slammer. Now people remember him as the guy who cheated old women out of their savings."



Tell: Meyer recalls that Shari Sabank, one of the SUPERVIXENS, "lost that whole ability to project sex. Her belly didn't like the fact she was working for me." 2: Meyer's cameo as a video vendor in AMAZON WOMEN ON THE MOON



a goodhearted honcho who effortlessly cooks female libidos. "I always like these tangling things with men and women not getting along," Meyer said. "Cheating. I like cheating. Even if they don't cheat, they get blamed for it. Having sex in my films was always full of duress and problems. It was never really easy. If they're outside, or on the desert floor, it's always uncomfortable. The boy always works at some kind of job that will never pay a lot and it doesn't make any sense. Why would she be with him?"

Almost twenty years ago, Meyer wrapped his final feature-length movie. During the height of his career, the filmmaker was a reluctant witness to the demise of his market. "What hurt my business is when the theatres got together in malls," explained Meyer. "The people who had the malls said, 'No way are you going to show X-rated films. So there were no theatres left to play I did one more picture but it didn't do as well because the venues in which to show UP! were limited: after all, it had an X-rating. Once you got into this rating thing, you couldn't distribute an X film.'"

These days, Russ Meyer is applying the finishing touches to his 3-volume autobiography, *A Clean Broad Count on a Profusion of Illustrations* ("Pictures opposite every page of text") and a new video saga. Though Meyer supervises his own video distribution company, he's in no hurry to drop another production into the can: "As a filmmaker, it's impossible to say how long it takes to finish a film. I just work and work and work. I've got something on the workbench here with a girl who is outrageously huxom. I'm building these videos of big, big-titted women. Oh, women with tits that are—what you'd call false, but I would call the most exciting things. No matter how they stand, stoop or bend over, there they are." □



tividad's hush—she had a hush on her like a blacksmith's apron—were two things that gave me the most problems with the censors," said Meyer. "This got passed but even by today's standards it's strong."

Meyer's films are driven by a generic premise that has been encored, ad infinitum, in modern erotic thrillers: a voluptuous but strong woman is married to



Another one of Ruess Meyer's photo renderings of his former wife. One scribe compared Eve Meyer to her Biblical precursor: "The first Eve walked so natural on unpared sand. Today's Eve still prefers these simple things."



EN 4^{ème} VITESSE

Ralph
MEEKER

PRODUCTION & REGIE : ROBERT ALDRICH

'50s Noir KISS ME DEADLY

THE CONTROVERSIAL "SEX 'N' VIOLENT" NUCLEAR NIGHTMARE
IS BACK—AND THIS TIME, THE ENDING IS UNEDITED.

BY ALAIN SILVER

It's noir and then some. KISS ME DEADLY is all about speed and violence, with a hint of sex and nuclear fusion thrown in for good measure. Forget about film noir and the subtleties of post-War angst, or the alienated visions of European critics intent on pointing with light. The late production-director Robert Aldrich, an American who played football in Virginia, was not unlike most of his grim tales about outsiders fighting to survive. KISS ME DEADLY pulls no punches as it ranges freely over the dark landscape of a frenetic, post-bomb L.A. and all its malignant undercurrents. This 1955 adaptation of Mickey Spillane's lowbrow, anti-Communist, macho fiction, which had masqueraded as a crime novel, takes Spillane's Mike Hammer from New York to Los Angeles, and situates him in a menacing milieu of sordid streets and decaying houses even less inviting than those stalked by Spade and Marlowe in preceding decades. Like Hammer's fast cars, the movie swerves through a frenzy of disconnected and cataclysmic scenes: even the opening credits scroll backwards! To Spillane's mix of fist fights, pipe bombs, gun play, and scene plain, old-fashioned torture, the filmmakers add a hint of grand opera and the love poetry of Christina Rossetti. From this unlikely combination, there emerges—as early commentators Raymond Berde and Etienne Chaumonot wrote in their *Panorama of American Film Noir*—"a savage lyricism [that] leads us into a world in full decomposition, ruled by the dissolute and the cruel. To these brutal and corrupt intrigues, Aldrich brings the most radical of solutions: nuclear apocalypse."

The story of KISS ME DEADLY is pretty simple. "Devotee dick" Mike Hammer



Robert Aldrich, director of the film, reads the Spillane novel by neo-noir neo-production unit. But nobody was smiling when the film was released by civic groups. Facing: the Delphi poster for KISS ME DEADLY.

(Ralph Meeker) is driving his jag back to L.A., when a short-haired blonde named Christina (Cloeis Leachman), naked under a trench coat, flags him down. Even though she "almost wrecked his pretty little car," Hammer gives her a lift. The vehicle is run off the road by a couple of sadistic hit men who torture Christina to death. Her corpse and Hammer's battered body are loaded into his car, which is pushed off a cliff. Hammer, thrown clear, regains consciousness in a hospital: with his girlfriend/assistant Velda (Maxine Cooper) and cop/buddy Pat (Wesley Addy) in attendance, the private investigator vows revenge.

Sidetracked by what Velda dubs "the great what's-it," Hammer follows a convoluted trail to its recovery. En route, he's the catalyst for several casualties, including the murder of his friend, Nick the mechanic (Nick DeLuca). His venue includes roughing up an opera singer, brutally castrating the fingers of crooked coroner, wiping out gangsters and negotiating with dummies. The end of Hammer's pursuit—and perhaps the world—concludes with his retrieval of a key, from Christina's dead body, which unlocks a receptacle that contains Pandora's box. And the box shields the who's-er. Pat tips-off his pal that whatever is inside the con-

"I've never seen a print without Hammer and Velda in the surf. It's the way I shot the ending, with Hammer left alive long enough to see what havoc he had caused."



Robert Aldrich directs *KISS ME DEADLY* (1955). Notes critic Mick LaSalle, "The first time I saw the film—on videotape, alone at night—it gave me night-mare. It's not a horror movie by any means but, like a good horror movie, it has images and key scenes that make sense on a subconscious level."

tainer, it's likely to be radioactive. Hammer ends up in a Malibu beach house staring down the barrel of a snub-nosed .38 squeezed by mysterious Lily Carver (Gaby Rodgers). "Kiss me, Mike," she coos, "I want you to kiss me. The list's less than that says, 'I love you,' and means something else." Hammer doesn't pucker-up, so—like any self-respecting femme fatale—she shoots him. Then Lily opens the box—which contains the "great what's-it"—and all hell breaks loose.

Coming at the end of America's "film noir" era, in a society that had yet to recover from Hiroshima and Joe McCarthy, *KISS ME DEADLY* is hardly an optimistic tale of heroism and redemption. In *City of Quartz*, social historian Mike Davis describes a post-War Los Angeles darkened in spirit by "that great anti-myth usually known as noir." Mike Hammer is the embodiment of "the great

anti-myth": his quest for the "great what's-it," in fact, is a cynical retread of the Holy Grail legend. But, this time around, it all blows up in your face. Hammer demythologizes "the knight in shining armor": his "what's it is for me?" attitude is unsubtle and unabashed, the antithesis of a fictional private detective like Raymond Chandler's urban knight, Philip Marlowe. *San Francisco Chronicle* critic Mick LaSalle noted, "Hammer is not the hard-boiled, down-on-his-luck detective that Spillane created but a total sleaze. If *KISS ME DEADLY* were a brand-new film, it would still be shocking in its mean spirit, its happy brutality and its audacious mix of real and surreal elements." Hammer's very name reveals all: a hard, heavy, unrelenting object pounding away mindlessly at social outcasts like two penny nails.

What kind of man is Mike

Hammer? *KISS ME DEADLY*'s opening dialogue types him quickly. Christina's blatant comment about his narcissism merely confirms what the icons suggest on, as she notes, "how much you can tell about the person from such simple things: the sports car, the trench coat, the lip curled in a sneer, the jazz on the radio." Aldrich and screenwriter A.J. Bezzerides use the character of Christina to explore and sentence what the images have already suggested, that this is neither a modest nor admissible man. The dialogue also reveals that Hammer knows exactly who he is and the image he presents. "What kind of message does it send you?" he queries Christina regarding his car. Clearly it sends the message Hammer wants it to send, a message about sex and power which Christina, the "fugitive from the laughing house," seems ready to talk about overtly. This is a first hint of role reversal, specifically circumvention from stereotype via audible communication. The older men, the pedantic Dr. Sobrin (Albert Dekker) and an Italian furniture mover, will use figurative images and make mythical allusions, rather than speak directly about people and objects. But the younger women—Christina, Velda, Friday and even Lily—verbally shoot from the hip: they say exactly what's on their minds.

All in all, this was unusual exposition for 1955. While the blatant sexuality may seem tame by current standards, Hammer's use of Velda to "date" (i.e. seduce/compromise/sleep with) unwitting husbands embroiled in his divorce cases—while he "took care of the wives"—was rather risqué for the mid-'50s. There were problems with the Legion of Decency and other bastions of morality that condemned the movie outright. And there was some more static from the MPAA over the way singer Madi Curnfort handled a phallic microphone in a night club scene. Aldrich himself wrote an article for the magazine *America* called "Sex and Violence Justified," a no-nonsense defense of why *KISS ME DEADLY* is so check full of what Nick calls "Va-va-voom."

Max Collins: "Velda [Maxine Cooper, below, w/ Ralph Meeker] is as close as Hammer can get to a conscience."



As an anti-traditional film noir that debuted just as that movement's "classic period" was fading-out, admiration for *KISS ME DEADLY* was initially the exclusive province of French critics. As Truffaut, Godard, Claude Chabrol and Bertrand Tavernier made the transition from critiquing movies to becoming filmmakers, a second and third generation of film-goers discovered *KISS ME DEADLY* at revival theaters and on videotape. Quentin Tarantino pays homage to the '55 release in *PULP FICTION*: sample the cameo by "the great what's-it" (a briefcase, briefly opened, discharges shafts of pulsing light). It's only the latest allusion to Sobiera's deadly box, not the first and probably not the last.

KISS ME DEADLY was scripted to end with the evaporation of evil via a nuclear catharsis. Replacing the drug dealers in Spillane's novel (something that film censors gauged as "off limits" back in 1955), Aldrich and Bozanne made up the atomic angle out of whole cloth, possibly taking a little inspiration from the era's apocalyptic science fiction or an earlier picture with a radioactive "macguffin" like Hitchcock's *NOTORIOUS* (1946). The film concludes in the beach home with Lily ignoring Sobiera's warnings and unlocking "Pandora's box" which contains, in the same context of Greek myth, pure phillogiston—a cleansing, combustible element, a purifying fire that reduces both her and the film's nether world to radioactive ash. Escaping from the house, Vikta and a wounded Hammer cower in the surf as the hapless Lily, and the Malibu cottage, are swallowed in a fiery, mini-mushroom cloud. Somewhere along the line, probably in the early '70s, something happened to that ending. It mysteriously disappeared from the negative in United Artists' vault, and a whole new controversy was born.

At this point in our chronicle, a change to "first person" seems appropriate: after all, your



Opening the Pandora's box, Lily activates an apocalyptic genie (nuclear energy), prompting her own incineration. It's Greek and its homage is *PULP FICTION*. The scene adheres to the narrative-related, fiery finale in Spillane's book.

humble commentator became part of the story. In late 1974, I was a film student at UCLA making frame enlargements from a 16mm rental print of *KISS ME DEADLY*; the resultant reproductions illustrated a *Film Comment* article on the film's visual style. One of the final frames I needed was the exploding beach house, which was created using lighting effects and opticals on the actual location, and a burning model on a sound stage. As I looked for a good frame, I noticed that the films' ending had changed! There was a jump cut which entirely eliminated Hammer and Velda's escape from the house. Shots were not merely removed from this particularly copy by some previous renter. The print itself was unaltered and the shots were clearly missing from whatever negative had been used to make it. A couple of years later, when I wrote the plot summary for *KISS ME DEADLY* in *Film Noir: An Encyclopedic Reference*, I was mostly concerned about being concise when I got to the last sentence. "Together they stumble into the surf as the house explodes."

By the time I was at work on the third edition of *Film Noir* in 1992, circumstances had changed: *KISS ME DEADLY*'s commercial videotapes, televi-

"If *KISS ME DEADLY* were a brand-new film, it would still be shocking in its mean spirit, its happy brutality and audacious mix of real & surreal elements."



Max A. Collins: "The truncated version of the movie concludes with *The End* superimposed over the burning beach house, implying Mike and Velda are trapped inside [it]. But, in the original director's cut (34), *The End* is superimposed over the couple—adrift in the ocean—surviving the blast."

sion copies, and laserdisc were all truncated versions, released sans the original ending. As authors of a piece titled *The Apocryphs of No-no-noon*, only Raymond Burgin and yours truly were on record with the "happy" ending and some commentators were questioning our memories. The best we got was the occasional benefit of the doubt about "whether such accounts indicate the existence of an alternate ending for the film or simply represent the kind of creative recollection—prompted by wish fulfillment—that often marks film commentary." Creative recollection? Wish fulfillment? One might wonder why any commentator would "wish" for Velda and Hammer to survive. Couldn't these writers see the jump cut? Couldn't they hear the acoustical evidence, what with the soundtrack abruptly cutting off?

Even those critics who had seen and had to accept the existence of the "either" ending made phony assertions such as "the studio added a final shot, still there in some prints, showing Hammer and Velda standing amid the waves." Somebody was confusing the controversy over the ending of Aldrich's *APACHE*, which had been shot two years earlier, after owing in to pressure to shoot an alternate, upbeat ending for that movie. Aldrich had vowed "never again." Still, no less a critical luminary than Robin Wood believed that Aldrich did not want the longer ending; in other words, it is a "gesture to the benign couple [that] remains in some prints." Aldrich never regarded his ending as any sort of gesture and said, when someone finally bothered to ask him, "I have never seen a print without—repeat!—without Hammer and Velda stum-

bling in the surf. That's the way it was shot, that's the way it was released; the idea being that Mike was left alive long enough to see what havoc he had caused, though certainly he and Velda were both seriously contaminated." Despite these comments published shortly after his death in 1983, Aldrich's ending continued to be, ironical-



ly, apocryphal.

For my own part, knowing the truth, I still felt like a voice crying in the video wasteland. Despite repeatedly citing what seemed to be the simple facts in *Film Noir's* third edition, and a book-length study of Robert Aldrich published in 1995 and again, last year, in *Film Noir Reader*, there seemed to be no way to convince '90s audiences that **KISS ME DEADLY** was not as it should be. I pointed out that a still of Mike and Velda, adrift in the water, appeared in a British book on '50s films: I pointed out that the theatrical trailer, which surfaced on the **KISS ME DEADLY** laser disc, included a shot of Mike and Velda in the surf. And, in *Film Noir Reader*, I even printed my own still of the couple wading in the ocean: in addition, I also reproduced page 130 of *Buzzsides's* script—

305 BEACH-VELDA AND MIKE Velda helps Mike and they run through the darkness which is subdued by sharp flickers of light. Now, as they **COME CLOSER TO CAMERA**, there is a tremendous explosion. Light gushes fiercely upon them and they stop, turn

306 ON BEACH COTAGE It is a boiling ball of fire.

307 ON BEACH-VELDA AND MIKE As he holds her, to protect her from the slight. Debris from the shattered house falls hissing into the sea behind

Max Crittles: "Spillane is not a fan of the film even though dialogue from the book [35] is inspired in the script."



F: However, flanked by Velda and Pat Greenberg (Heddy Hagg), gets the bad news: his gun license is revoked. **(F)** A drug (Jack Elam) delivers Hennessy, who is "arrested" by a gangster's flirtatious sister (Marion Carr),

them.

FADE OUT: THE END

But it was all to no avail. A new 35mm print, screened at a month-long career retrospective for Aldrich at Lincoln Center, was also mangled. Compounding the irony was that Aldrich had always been at the forefront of the struggle for a director's creative rights. From his disputes with Harry Cohn—to his precedent-making lawsuit in Italy over *SODOM AND GOMORRAH*, to his struggle with Lorimar over his last feature—Aldrich had always fought for his convictions. While he was president of the Directors Guild (1978), Aldrich—to the detriment of his career—confronted producers during contract negotiations and insisted upon creative rights concessions. But even this renaissance man couldn't restore the ending to his most audacious and controversial film.

I cobbled together an animated GIF of the original ending, replete with surf shot, storm frame enlargements. Posting it on my *Film Noir Reader* web



site, I decided not to worry about it anymore. I was later shaken out of my lethargy by an e-mail from an editor of an on-line film journal: he wanted to know where that animation on my web page came from, where could he see the uncut version? Finally a light bulb went on. Aldrich's personal prints, which had been written to the Directors Guild of America, probably included an uncut print of **KISS ME DEADLY**. As a member of the DGA's Special Projects Committee, it was easy to obtain permission to check that print which had been stored in the

UCLA archives. Now I needed someone at MGM/UA to listen. Glean Erickson, an editor friend who works in their video division, introduced me to studio archivist John Kirk. After a false start in which some misguided preservationist at UCLA sent over their number two print—you guessed it, with the ending missing—Glean and John got their first look and I was reacquainted with the "real" ending. I'd forgotten how much footage was actually missing: a total of nine shots and almost a minute of screen time. Angle-after-an-

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'50s Erotica
**BETTIE
PAGE**



Christa Campbell portrayed the title role in E! Entertainment's documentary, **BETTIE PAGE: FROM PEE-UP TO SEX QUEEN**. Prohibited from "doing Bettie's more risqué stuff" by the cable channel, which preferred "its less version of the pin-up teen's life," Campbell opted to turn a more timid Page for E! photographer Jan Deen and stylist Nina Finizio.

**PROFILE BY
LAURA SCHIFF**

I don't know when it was, exactly, that she first entered my sphere of perception. Certainly, Bettie Page had been lurking around my subconscious for decades—her smile, those bluish-black bangs, that air of wholesomeness gift-wrapped in leopard print and leather. The kinky girl-next-door. One thing I'm sure of is that as soon as I was able to put a name to that face, I saw evi-

**PHOTOGRAPHY
BY JAN DEEN**

Bettie debuted as a men's magazine model in '51. Publisher Bob Harris invited her to pose for *Wink*, *Titter*, etc.



**LAUDED AS THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR PIN-UP, HER
LEGACY IS A HYBRID OF SEX APPEAL AND SKELETONS**



Posing for amateur camera clubs, Bettie Page earned \$10-\$20 per photo session. She emphatically pointed out her trademark behind-it-over thought: It was wrong to pose in the nude. I didn't feel uncomfortable about it."

dence of Bettie Page everywhere I looked—calendars, posters, stationery, comic books, postcards, you name it, there she was. How, I wondered, had she ever managed to elude my radar for so long?

The answer, I realized later, is as much a part of American mythology as Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe. Over the course of seven years, from 1950 to 1957, Bettie Page became the most frequently photographed pin-up model in the world. Ever. Then, at the height of her popularity, she mysteriously disappeared. Wild stories circulated among her fans—everything from alien abductions to mob assassinations—until the woman known as Bettie Page became much more than the sum of her beautiful parts. A Bettie Page revival swept the nation in the '80s, and

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Bettie's final pin-up, shot in Florida by amateur photographer Edmund Knapp. She retired from modeling, '57.



BETTIE PAGE

THE TRAGEDY BEHIND THE LEGEND

WHY DID THE BOMBSHELL DISAPPEAR IN 1957? AND WHY DIDN'T SHE RESURFACE UNTIL NOW? THE ANSWERS...

By LAURA SCHIFF

It wasn't until August of last year that I learned about Bettie Page's darkest secret: during that blistering month, I became acquainted with Richard Foster, a 27-year-old Virginia journalist who had written an unauthorized biography titled *The Real Bettie Page: The Truth About the Queen of the Pin-Ups* (Birch Lane Press). The book chronicles the whereabouts of Bettie Page during her "lost years"—the span of time from December 1957 to 1992, during which the elusive model was missing in action. If you've read my other articles about Bettie in this issue, you already know that her disappearance prompted artists Robert Blue, Dave Stevens, Greg Thonkston and Olivia to render the Queen of Curves into immortality: their art spirited Bettie's image and mystique to a mainstream audience. The result? During the period that Bettie Page was inaccessible to the public eye, she became a legend. The enigma contributed to her celebrity and the whole Bettie Page phenomenon: nobody knew a thing about where the lady was actually hiding. Nobody, that is, except Richard Foster.

Currently an assistant editor of a Richmond alternative magazine called *Style Weekly*, Foster's interest in Bettie Page began in 1991, while he was still a journalism student at Virginia Commonwealth University. A friend gave him a copy of Greg Thonkston's *Betty Pages* and, pretty soon, Foster was hooked. The enterprising young man decided to write a freelance story about the Bettie Page fan movement.



Bettie Page's student yearbook photo, 1940 Morse Fogg High School. Pictured as the student "most likely to succeed," she qualified as the school newspaper's co-editor.

It was through this initial research and interviewing process that Foster connected with Bettie's brother, Jack Page. Foster wrote a letter to Bettie, asking her to fill in the blanks about her life, and Jack promised to forward this on to his sister. "Five or six weeks later, in the mail, comes this letter—return address Bettie Page," recalls Foster. "I was flabbergasted, really floored. Her letter was six pages that said, 'Here's where I've been.' More or less. She left the last thirteen years or so a mystery to me. There were a lot of

names and places and things that Bettie mentioned so, using that letter as a jumping-off point, I started tracking down a lot of people she knew. I found old yearbook pictures, I found marriage licenses. I just found a lot of the flotsam and jetsam that anybody leaves behind in their life—documents, old friends, that kind of thing." Foster wrote one story for the last issue of *The Betty Pages*, and another for *The Betty Pages* second annual. Says Foster, "Later on, around spring of 1994, as I was still researching stuff and thinking I might write a book about Bettie Page, that's when I came across this other stuff."

This "other stuff" was a tiny little news item from 1982 that was printed in a back section of *The Los Angeles Times*: Foster read that a woman named Bettie Page was arrested for the attempted murder of 68-year-old Leonie Haddad. Awaiting trial, Bettie was quoted as addressing her victim with, "God told me to kill you." The clip also mentioned that the accused had been incarcerated for an earlier stabbing. Over the next three years, Foster acted on this significant initial clue, piecing together the puzzle that was Bettie Page's life and thus opening a Pandora's box of information that would rewrite history.

I was able to read an advance copy of Foster's book before it hit book stores last November. I found it to be a gritty and absorbing read that really made me feel like I knew the '50s icon. Though I thoroughly enjoyed Karen Kessel's authorized bio, *Bettie Page: The Life of a Pin-Up Legend*, I have to admit that Foster's version is more vi-

brant and alive, less airbrushed. I wish I'd been able to read the book before I'd interviewed Bettie.

Highlights of the author's discovery: After Bettie Page gave up on her modeling career and left New York in December '57, she returned home to Florida. Bettie later met Ellsworth Boyd, a Ft. Lauderdale lifeguard and amateur photographer who asked the model if she'd pose for him on the beach. These resultant color snapshots became the last photographic images ever published of Bettie Page. Very soon after this, Bettie left Ft. Lauderdale to shack up in Key West with a former summer fling named Armond Carlyle Wallerson, whom she married on November 26, 1958. The newlyweds pooled their money to buy a 26-foot fishing boat, with which they hoped to catch seafood to sell to local restaurants. Kids raided their lobster traps, however, and the couple eventually ditched the boat and took a loss, divorcing after a month of marriage. A despondent Bettie Page found herself wandering the streets of Key West at twenty minutes to midnight on New Year's Eve '58. She ended up drifting into the Latin American Baptist Temple, where a

Richard Foster's book reveals the truth: "Bettie Page was a troublemaker who did change America's sexuality."



Bettie posing for Irving Klen while she was a New York resident. "She was approachable, out there. She's warm & very girl-next-door but still very hot."

New Year's service was being conducted. The young reverend welcomed her into the congregation and, says Bettie, "I turned my life over to the Lord, and God led me to go [to] Bible schools for three years."

Bettie Page moved to California in 1959 to attend classes at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles and Moody Bible Institute. She worked during the summer of 1961 as a counselor for the Billy Graham Crusade, spreading the reverend's evangelical message to local women. Later on, she moved to Portland, Oregon to enroll full-time at Multnomah School of the Bible. Bettie told Foster that these were the happiest years of her life.

By spring of 1962, Bettie Page had decided she wanted to be a missionary. Her dreams were dashed, however, when she was turned down by the mission board. Heartbroken, she returned to Nashville to face her father, who was dying of diabetes; the man who had sexually molested Bettie as a child had apparently turned to religion in his later years, and had become a preacher. Bettie made peace with her father and took care of him,

teaching Sunday School and working as a secretary on the side. On the day that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated—November 22, 1963—Bettie called up Billy Neal, ex-husband #1, and announced she wanted to get back together with him. This is the guy who threatened to kill himself during a lovers' quarrel in New York, and slashed the face of Bettie's neighbor with a knife. Despite this, Bettie and Billy soon wed for the second time. After a particularly horrible spat, in which Billy tried to strangle his new bride, Bettie left him and eventually moved back to Miami.

It was at Miami's Palace Ballroom that Bettie met Harry Lear. They fell in love at first sight and six months later, on Valentine's Day '67, became husband and wife. Lear had three children, ages seven to eleven, from a previous marriage and Bettie was excited about being a mother. The kids, however, had a different agenda. They were resentful of Bettie's strict rules and religious zeal and refused to accept her into their family. By the early 1970s, Bettie had gotten it into her head that there were seven gods

and that she was their prophet. Lear concluded that Bettie Page was mentally ill and that their marriage was over. Bettie moved to Boca Raton, Florida to live at a retreat center known as Bible Town Community Church. On January 17, 1972, Lear's request for a divorce was granted. When Bettie got the news, she ran through the Bible Town motel complex "waving a .22-caliber pistol and shouting about the retribution of God." Bettie was tackled by a Bible Town staffer and hauled away by the Boca Raton police, who later released her into Lear's protective custody. Knowing that Bettie had no place else to go, Lear invited his ex-wife to live with him and his children in a spare bedroom of his Hialeah home. He probably should have quit while he was ahead. On April 18, 1972, Bettie held Lear and the three children hostage in the living room. Threatening to kill them with a large kitchen knife, she forced the family to pray before a picture of Jesus. Lear was eventually able to escape and get help. Bettie was charged with breach of peace and committed to Jackson Memorial Hospital, a state mental care facility. She remained there for four months, until she was discharged into Lear's care.

Two months later, the cops were back at Lear's home. This time, they found Bettie beating on Lear with her fists and "tearing him with venom." Bettie was thrown into the squad car; it was here that she sustained injuries, which required emergency medical attention by...uh...performing an unsanitary sexual act with a, uh, inanimate object. (Hey, I can't tell you all the juicy stuff—read the book! Suffice to say that in his police report, Officer Tom Fitzpatrick wrote, "Defendant: psycho.")

Bettie Page was charged with disorderly conduct and assault and battery, but these were dismissed when



she voluntarily re-committed herself to Jackson State. This time, she remained at the mental hospital for six months, sometimes under suicide watch. In the spring of 1973, Bettie returned to Lear's home in Hialeah. She spent her time gardening and doting on her two pet dogs. When her brother Jimmie invited Bettie to stay with him in his Santa Monica home in '78, she moved back to California.

Bettie didn't stay with Jimmie for very long. By April '79, the unemployed ex-model moved into a trailer in Lawndale, California that was owned by an old married couple. In an unprovoked attack, Bettie stabbed Mrs. Esther Trevin below her left arm with an 8"-long serrated bread knife while the elderly landlord was taking her laundry off the clothes line. When the woman's husband came to her aid, Bettie stabbed him, too. Mr. Trevin belted Bettie over the head with a wrench and knocked her unconscious before calling the police. She was arrested on two counts of assault with a deadly weapon.

At a preliminary hearing, a Los Angeles County Superior judge found Bettie Page to be mentally incompetent and had her committed to Patton State Hospital, one of California's largest mental health treatment centers. Almost a year later, on May 22, 1980, the court ruled that Bettie Page was not guilty by reason of insanity. She was sentenced to five more years incarceration at Patton State. By February 1981, however, Bettie Page was released on the recommendation of her doctor and began to receive outpatient treatment.

In April 1982, a nonprofit housing service for the elderly placed a 59-year-old, 180-pound Bettie Page in the Los Angeles home of a recent widow named Leenie Haddad. Immediately, however, Haddad realized something was wrong. Bettie would spend long hours in the bathroom, preaching



Page is a skirt-lined saint as a stripteaser for Kew's burlesque Kew "She became such a force in the S&M movement, she was a matriarch. I admire her."

sermons into a tape recorder. She told Haddad that "the seven gods" spoke to her, dictating their gospel so Bettie could turn these "prophets" into a book. When Haddad alerted the housing service to this bizarre behavior, the agency neglected to inform her of Bettie's history of mental illness, saying only that her new roommate was having trouble getting over a divorce. On June 11, 1982, Haddad awoke at 4AM to find Bettie sitting on top of her stomach, pinning her to the bed and brandishing a

foot-long serrated bread knife. Whispering that this was God's will, Bettie slashed Haddad's face, stabbed her four times in the chest and severed part of the woman's finger. Haddad managed to smash Bettie over the head with a telephone and then ran across the street to a neighbor's house. The former pin-up queen was charged with attempted murder and assault with a deadly weapon. On November 5, 1982, she was ruled insane and sentenced to ten years at Patton State. Reports author Richard Fos-

"It started with a letter from Bettie Page. It was six pages that said, 'Here's where I've been'...more or less. She left the last 13 years or so a mystery."

ter, "[Bettie] was dragged kicking and screaming from the courtroom, insulting Haddad, the judge, prosecutor and public defender and calling them all liars in her deep, booming Southern drawl." Bettie was officially diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic. Ironically, when she was released from the institution in 1992, Bettie Page discovered that the outside world was bailing her as a hero.

As I write this story, Foster's unauthorized bio on Bettie is scheduled to debut in three weeks. Only time will tell how the public will react to the controversy. "Very early on," says Foster, "when I was sending my manuscript to different publishing companies, one publisher described himself as a Bettie fan. He finally ended up saying, 'I don't think the world's ready or needs to know this stuff about Bettie Page.' The fact of the matter is, it's true. I can understand that feeling. Bettie Page fans are extremely protective. They think of her as their own. They love her passionately, furiously—sometimes to the exclusion of everything else in the world. They're very fanatical sometimes, but it's not a bad thing. They feel a very personal connection to her. Women love her because they feel she made an impact on their lives. Her photos are so uninhibited, maybe it gives women a little promise that they can find a sense of their own sexuality, their own freedom, their own beauty. Men feel that she helped them

during their adolescence. Bettie was approachable. She's not marble. She is very warm and friendly, down-home and country and girl-next-door, but she was still very hot. When [Bettie Page Fan Club president] Steve Brewster read my book, I was more nervous about him reading it than I was about anyone else in the world because she means so much to him. But the fact is, after he read it, he said, 'I think it's a great book. I couldn't put it down.'

"I want people to realize that Bettie is a real human being. This may hurt the sales of my book, but if all you want is a celluloid Bettie, then there's pictures out there. But if you really are interested in her, and you really truly love her, find out who she is. And don't slight my book until you've read it. I believe, and other people have backed me up on this, that I handled it honestly and sensitively and accurately. I'm sure there are a lot of details there that, if I had had Bettie's co-operation, it might have been a much better book. But I think it's a good book and a great read."

"I've done some things that other people haven't, like talking to the fans. Bettie's become such a force in the S&M movement. She was a matriarch. I also talked to the people like [Bettie's New York boyfriend] Carl Arrese. This is the man who Bettie has read

Richard Foster. "If all you want is a celluloid Bettie, there's pictures... but if you love her, find out who she is."



One of Bettie Page's sexbombing confidantes: the Joseph LaLadi model (L). LaLadi also sculpted S-queens Tiffany Sinapi and Sharon Kelly into kits.

is the only man she's truly ever loved, and nobody had ever talked to him. And he had a fascinating story to tell, and a very real story."

"Did you meet with much opposition while writing this book?" I ask Foster.

"No, I really didn't," he says. "I wasn't working with Bettie on this, so there really were no opportunities for the opposition. I know for a fact that [Bettie's brother] Jack Page has read the book and I know that a lot of this was news to him. I have heard, second-hand, that Bettie was given just a portion of the book and that her reaction was, 'I knew this was going to come out, but I wish it hadn't.' I've also heard that she's denying that some of it happened, particularly (the stabbing episode with) the Trevins. All I've got to say is, it's unfortunate but it's there in the police report. The officer showed up, those two people were exhibiting knife wounds, they're saying it's not provoked, Bettie's not responsive, and the courts find that she did it and commit her. And then a similar incident happened not two years later. There's definitely a pattern of trouble. Honestly, in view of all the hard

evidence, all the records and court and police reports, I don't think she can [deny it]. The police records and court reports were 'protected' comments, which means you're protected from libel. In other words, if I'm covering a court hearing and somebody on the witness stand says, 'So-and-so killed so-and-so'—even if it's not true—if I repeat that comment in a story, I'm protected because it was said during a court of law as testimony. I feel secure in my sources. I don't think it can all be fabricated."

In his book, Foster quotes a number of psychologists who analyze Bettie Page's behavior. Dr. Mary Clement, believes that these psychotic attacks were a result of Bettie's early sexual abuse by her father. I ask Foster how the abuse ties in with Bettie's aura of sexual freedom that comes across so well in her photographs. "I've heard some of the experts say that sometimes sexual abuse, as a child, can result in exhibitionist tendencies," replies the author. "This is an effort to take control of one's sexuality and wield it as a weapon. In some respects, I think Bettie probably subconsciously did need to do

that for herself. I don't think that Bettie ever intended her modeling to become a career. Consciously, she always wanted to be an actress. I think that's one of the most interesting things about Bettie. She was a trendsetter. She did change America's sexuality, but she viewed the modeling as a side job. It was just a means of achieving her real goal of acting."

"It's ironic because she's famous for liberalizing America's sexual values. This from a woman who wouldn't sleep with a producer to get a movie role. To her, the modeling was just a job but her pictures had lasting power and she resonated. She became a lot more important because of the ripple effects of what she did. She wasn't a household name in the '50s. She was an under-the-counter name, a hidden-beneath-the-mattress name. But she became important because all these people remembered her and her pictures had a liberating effect on them."

"Do you think that your book will impact Bettie Page fans in a negative way?" I ask.

Foster replies, "Knowing how protective Bettie Page's fans are, and knowing how much they love her, I really truly believe that this will not harm their love for her. I know it won't. To me, Steve Brewster is representative of everyone who loves Bettie Page. He's Bettie Page fan #1, and it hasn't harmed his affection for her. He understands her more as a human being. I don't see this as a negative book. I think a lot of people might, until they read it. I like Bettie Page. I admire her. I'm glad she's finally getting the due that she's been seeking her whole life. I hope she has a lot longer to enjoy it. Personally, I'd like to hear how she overcame her mental illness and what those years behind the walls were like. And there's a story there that I'd really still like to know." □

"From 1950 to 1957, Bettie Page was the world's most frequently photographed pin-up model. At the height of her career, she disappeared..."

It shows no signs of slowing down. If anything, the pin-up queen is more mainstream now than ever before, with at least three different biographical documentaries either currently gearing up for production or recently wrapped.

Born in 1923 in Jackson, TN, Betty Mae Page was the second eldest of six children. Neither of her parents had more than a third grade education, and her father was a convicted car thief. Her mother reportedly went into labor in a movie theater and barely made it home before giving birth. During the Depression, the Page family traveled throughout the South as Bettie's father looked for work. When his job prospects came up empty, the family was evicted.

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Bettie as the Police Gazette's siren: Her sexuality prompted Broadway columnist Earl Wilson to pay Page as Miss Pin-Up Girl of the World.



Jude Stein, coauthoring the pin-up legend for photographer Harry Langdon, is back to Bettie Page's legacy. Page personalized a book description to Stein: "It's you who keeps the flame of pin-up beauty alive today!"

BETTIE PAGE

ROBERT BLUE'S ARTISTIC RENAISSANCE

FETISHISM AND FANTASY: RENEGADE PAINTER/"BORN AGAIN PERVERT" RENDERS BETTIE INTO A BONDAGE ICON.

BY LAURA SCHIFF



"I'm a fetishist," the artist declares with a laugh. "I'm just a born-again pervert." This news, admittedly, doesn't come as much of a shock to me. After all, Robert Blue is the man responsible for rescuing Bettie Page's outlandish bondage photos from the bottomless pit of obscurity in the 1970s, and turning them into legit-

One of Blue's "larger-than-life" paintings of Bettie. His affection for Page (p. 56) was driven by adult mag, which he started to collect at age 10.





One of Robert Rauschenberg's
Bette Midler: "It's the
kind of painting that you
might see in primitive
cultures as a dedication
to their gods, where the
workmanship is so
screwily out of propor-
tion—to what it's repre-
senting—that it's safe."



Buscema's "dominatrix" depiction of Bette: "As an artist, my visual senses have totally overtaken me. Bette Page had a definite personality that was communicated by the performer, inasmuch as she was expressing joy or loss."

"Bettie Page was a born actress. The real pity was that Hollywood basically heard her low, raspy Tennessee-accent voice & decided it wouldn't work."

imate artwork. Dave Stevens isolated Bettie's girl-next-door image for his *Rocketer* comic book; the 1991 film adaptation sanitized Stevens' work, converting Bettie into a virtuous damsel-in-distress named Jenny Blake ("You're the Rocke-who?") sans the kinky milieu. But Blue had shocked the fine art world with his life-size oil paintings depicting Bettie's dark-or-side.

"I'm basically just your standard, conservative coked/high heel shoe person," continues Blue. "I have no excuses, or no intellectual reasons, for being a shoe fetishist. It's just that I enjoy looking at women or men or dogs or anybody in high heel shoes. The shape is so wonderful. As an artist, my visual senses have totally overtaken me. I'm just cramming everything I can down my optic nerve. Bettie Page had a definite personality that was communicated by the perceiver, inasmuch as she was expressing joy or fear. She was a born actress. The real pity was that Hollywood basically heard her low, raspy Tennessee-accent and decided that wouldn't work, so they X'd her."

Physically, Robert Blue perfectly fits the part of the renegade artist. With a full beard and a mischievous gleam in his eyes, he reminds me of Robert DeNiro's Satan in 1987's *ANGEL HEART*. We're having breakfast at the Sportsmen's Lodge Hotel in Studio City, and I watch as he jokes good-naturedly with the



Blue traces his source of inspiration to BAD shots of Bettie Page, photographed by Irving Penn/Kluge/The Kluwe photo archive. Movie Star News, perpetuates the tale of Page movies (*Escape Out of Nowhere*, *Teaser Girl* in *Night Heels*, etc.).

white-haired waitress who is serving us, poolside. The respectable head of The Los Angeles Academy of Art's fine art department, Blue had a rather unconventional childhood. His father was Ben Blue, the legendary nightclub owner and comedian who palled around with WC Fields and opened the Las Vegas Flamingo for mobster Bugsy Siegel. His mother was a former showgirl and artist. With these provocative personalities influencing Blue's formative years, it's hardly surprising

that the young artist collected fetish magazines by the time he was ten years old.

Drafted into the army as a technical field map maker during the Vietnam War, Blue returned home and—leaning on Irving and Pamela Kluge's bondage photos as his inspiration—laid the foundation for his Bettie Page murals in 1971. The oil canvases were larger than life, measuring approximately 6'x3', and included the most intricate details of Bettie's costumes—right down to the pattern of her

fishnet stockings.

"[Pin-up artists] Armstrong and Mozart and Elvgren and Petty and Vargas, they all stayed away from net stockings," says Blue. "The problem is that if one line that curves around Bettie's leg isn't lined up, then it just stands out like a sore thumb. I mean, all of a sudden, you're faced with a monumental task of making that line a perfect continuum and it wraps around her leg maybe 300 times—150 in one direction, and 150 in the other direction—and every time it crisscrosses, it must maintain a perfect diamond shape or the whole thing starts falling apart. So, here I am, building 350 plastic stencils to steady my hand. It just gets insane. I mean, I'm a little crazy. It's the kind of painting that you see in primitive cultures as a fetishism to their gods, where the workmanship is so screwily out of proportion to what it's representing that it's nuts. It's craziness."

HEARTBREAKERS: Peter Coyote as Arthur Blue—who paints a knee-deep Bettie Page in his central image—with the late Carol Weyers as his model-lover. "Peter nailed me perfectly," says Bob Blue, whose life inspired the film.



More on Robert Blue
see page 48

from their home and forced to move in with Bettie's grandmother in Nashville. Bettie and her siblings were so destitute that they couldn't afford shoes or toys. She entertained herself by drawing beautiful women on the doors of her grandmother's porcelain cabinet using only the oil from her fingertips.

When Bettie was nine, her father, Roy Page, got a neighboring 15-year-old girl pregnant. Mortified, Bettie's mother moved out, filed for divorce and attempted to raise her children on her own. This proved to be a Herculean task for an unskilled woman in 1932, and when the money ran out, Bettie and her two sisters were put in an orphanage for a year. The Page girls made the most of this situation, creating a game called "Program," in which Bettie and her sisters would mimic the poses of movie stars and models in magazines and newspapers. It was through this pastime, Bettie has said, that she first learned how to pose.

Bettie was finally reunited with her mother, Edna, and brothers when she was 11. In *Bettie Page: The Life of a Pin-Up Legend*, by Karen Essex and James L. Swanson, Bettie recalls, "We were so poor that we were

"In the world of modern fantasy pin-up art, Marilyn Monroe's only rival as a direct source of inspiration is Bettie Page."—author Steve Sullivan



BETTIE PAGE

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE LEGEND.

BACK AFTER A 40-YEAR "VANISHING ACT," THE LEGEND DISCUSSES HER CELEBRITY.

BY LAURA SCHIFF

Author's Note: The following interview took place on July 2, 1997—two months before I learned about Bettie Page's history of mental illness and her prior arrest for attempted murder (see page 35).

I felt like I'd just stepped into Area 51. Chasing down an interview with the elusive Bettie Page is an exercise in frustration and futility; a journey not to be embarked upon lightly. It consists of wading through a maddening profusion of red tape and propaganda, hunting down a lot of deadbeat contacts and facing rejection on a daily basis. For months, I called mysterious envoys who were rumored to be FOBs (Friends of Bettie). They would inevitably lead me to their friends, who led me to their friends. And so on and so on. Forget Roosevelt, Hale-Bopp and Kennedy—I was beginning to think that Bettie Page was the biggest government cover-up going. My friends enjoyed messing with my head by pretending to hear clicking noises on my phone.

And then, I got a lucky break. Bettie Page agreed to talk to me. At least that's what her intermediary told me. I adopted a wait-and-see



Since 1949, Bettie, then a secretary, attended a teaching institution. Unsurprisingly, her "beauty proved too distracting to students."

attitude while I spent the next week being briefed by her handlers. I was to submit my interview questions in advance, in writing. I was to stick to the predetermined script; ad-libbing would result in immediate termination (of the interview, not me. At least I think so.) Bettie was to be accompanied by a chaperone at all times. I was cautioned not to cause Bettie undue excitement or confusion. Keep it brief. No sudden hand movements. No loud noises. No one under 18 will be admitted without a parent or guardian.

By the time I was finally introduced to Bettie, I was a borderline paranoid. I haven't been so nervous about facing a 74-year-old woman since the time I lied to my grandmother about the wild beer party I threw at her house while she was vacationing in Florida.

From all the hype surrounding this shindig, I was expecting Bettie to be a doddering old lady who could be reduced to a quivering mass of incomprehensible gibberish by one ill-timed question posed by yours truly. I wiped my sweaty kid gloves on my leather miniskirt and hoped the world would eventually forgive me for sending the poor dear to an early grave.

As it turns out, my fears were unwarranted. Bettie was just as sharp as ever. Okay, so she'd thought of her answers beforehand and read notes off a crib sheet. Hell, so did I. Bettie was still Bettie, only older. What a relief.

"What's your reaction to the Bettie Page craze that is sweeping the nation again?" I asked her, leading off with the most obvious question.

"I am very surprised about all of the attention I'm getting these days," Bettie replied in her heavy Tennessee drawl. "You see, I don't feel I'm anyone that special, like the mo-



"Maybe one reason for my newfound popularity," surmises Bettie, "is that men and women are not as uptight about nudity as they were back in the '50s."

dia is making me out to be. I am thrilled, but, at the same time, I don't really understand it. I'm especially pleased that I have so many fans among the very young people. Maybe one reason for my newfound popularity is due to the fact that, today, men and women are not as uptight about nudity and sexual expression as they were back in the '50s, when I was modeling. It seems that a lot of people think I had something to do with this change in attitude."

Right at that moment, I realized the limitations of this arranged interview. I wanted to ask Bettie to elaborate on this last bit about her being the perceived harbinger of the sexual revolution. But,

"I'd like the world to remember me through my pictures," says Bettie. "A pretense of covers (by) validate her post 'rejection of modeling'."



alas, this was not on my list of approved and sanitized questions. As my eyes darted about furiously, searching for some way to circumvent this minor technicality, I heard Bettie's chaperone breathe in sharply—a not-so-subtle hint that my time was running out, so I'd better quit stalling and move on to the next question.

I sighed and looked down at the coffee table book that was resting in my lap. Bettie's vibrant, smiling face looked up at me—a face not so different from hers today. "What do you think is the secret to living a happy life?" I asked her.

"I think it involves a lot of things," Bettie said. "First, you've got to take good care of your health, or nothing else even matters. I have always tried to live true to myself. Do what I felt like doing, as long as I was not breaking the law or hurting



A camera club 3-D view sheet in 1954-55. Left: Miami shutterbug Barney Yeager, per artist's shot "the best photo renderings in Page's career," collected in book form.



anyone else." I recall the story of how Bettie and a bunch of other camera club models were hauled into jail one day—it seems they were charged with indecent exposure for posing topless in a field alongside a road. Bettie had insisted that she was not indecent, and she'd finally been released and fined five dollars. Apparently, Bettie's chaperone was thinking about a similar in-

cident, because I caught her stifling a laugh.

"I think it is important to treat others with consideration and respect," Bettie continued. "I believe in the old Bible adage, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' I have no regrets about anything I have done in the past. It was all done with truth and integrity."

"Many people have com-

pared you to Marilyn Monroe," I say.

"That always makes me laugh!" Bettie says with a chuckle. "I'm very flattered. Who wouldn't be? But I think Marilyn was an icon of much more dramatic and tragic proportions than I ever was. Besides, she was—and still is—world famous. I was not even in the same class with her. What an incredible beauty Marilyn Monroe was!

However, I always thought I had better legs than her. But in the upper boob—breasts, I mean—she had it all over me. Maybe we are similar in spirit, though. She seems to have been such a sweet girl, like I was. But I often wonder how truly happy she was." The ball is back in my court (where'd Bettie pick up a word like *coot*?).

When I interviewed Julie Strain, the actress who's playing the title role in Single Spark Pictures' *LOOKING FOR BETTIE PAGE*, she told me that, "Bettie wants to have dinner with me, but I've just been too busy." I decided to ask Bettie what she admires about Julie's work. "Well, I don't really know Julie," Bettie tells me. "I've only seen her pictures. But she really has what it takes, and she should have a successful career. She seems very driven, and that's important. I guess somewhere along the way, I inspired her. Imagine that. I wish her all the best." That little admission ought to give Julie hugging rights into the next millennium.

By now, my time with Bettie was almost up. She was starting to fidget with her crib notes. "How would you like the world to remember you?" I ask her.

"I've thought about that a lot," Bettie sighs. "I guess how I'd like the world to remember me is through my pictures. Because I was truly happy in each and every one of them. I really enjoyed modeling. I didn't strive, really, to be an actual model. I just liked to pose. The time I spent modelling was a period in my life that was a lot of fun because I enjoyed it. And I guess now I found out that I was even better at it than I ever knew...at the time, anyway."

And with that, Bettie Page thanked me for interviewing her and was whisked out of the public eye once again. Someone should name a comet after her. □

"Bettie posed in itty-bitty bikinis that she sewed herself—a far cry from the modest beachwear that was de rigueur in those times. Next stage: nudity."

lucky to get an orange in our Christmas stockings... Momma wasn't trained to do anything...The only help she ever had was that, every Christmas, we would get a box of food from a welfare organization." Desperate for money, Edna Page rented out a room to Bettie's father. This only made things worse, as Roy began to sexually molest his 13-year-old daughter Bettie, stepping just short of intercourse so as to avoid another embarrassing teen pregnancy. When the naïve girl finally realized what the scumbag was doing to her, she hated him for it. She knew that education was her ticket out of this hellish life, so she diligently applied herself to her studies.

After graduating second in her high school class, Bettie attended George Peabody College, a four-year teaching institution in Nashville. She supported herself by working as a secretary. By now it was 1943, and America was at war. Bettie's college sweetheart, Billy Neal, got drafted, and humiliated the 19-year-old girl into marrying him. Bettie regretted it immediately.

Upon her college graduation, Bettie realized that she wasn't cut out for teaching. Her beauty was too distracting to the boys in her class, and she couldn't control them. She moved to San Francisco, then to Miami, and finally ended up in New York. She was in the Big Apple all of four days when she was abducted by four men, whisked into a car, she was

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Writer Mark Gaber:
"Bettie Page was one of
most ubiquitous models
of the mid-'50s, appear-
ing in dozens of mag-
azines." Page's culprits for
poor taste include the gods:
"By the time a sport has
money to burn, the fire
has gone out."

BETTIE PAGE

ROBERT BLUE PART TWO

**"B&D BETTIE" BLOOMS AS
ENRAGED FEMINISTS FUME.**

BY LAURA SCHIFF

Of course, the craftsmanship invested within a Robert Blue painting helps to justify the price. His original Bettie Page canvases sold for \$10,000 in the 1970s. Actor Jack Nicholson, a longtime admirer of Bettie Page, owns a vintage Blue of Kiki Red, a famous stripper from the '40s. The story goes that back in 1975,

Robert Blue's homage to Bettie.



right after he earned an Academy Award nomination for *ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST*, Nicholson attended a Robert Blue show at L.A.'s David Stuart Gallery. Reluctant to spend the money until he was assured of winning an Oscar and a reciprocal salary hike, Nicholson had no choice but to decline the purchase of Blue's paintings. Upon seeing the golden statuette, Nicholson returned to the gallery but, by that time, all of Blue's Bettie paintings had sold to other buyers. Nicholson then went to Blue's studio, where he saw a work-in-progress of the Kiki Red piece. He commissioned it on sight.

All through the '70s and into the mid-'80s, Blue's "Betties" sold like crazy in New York, Los Angeles, and London. Then in 1985, right when his career was hotter than Hades in July, Blue stopped painting his kinky muse. Why? He heard from a supposedly reliable source that Bettie Page wanted the artist to cease and desist. "I got word that Bettie's a born-again Christian, and that she's alive and she's an





"I wasn't interested in stopping on Bette's show, only painting them," insists Blue. "By that time, I had completed forty Bette Page caricatures. My career span along nicely. But after I stopped, my career was in shambles."



F Blue's boozed Bettie: "Artists want to be politically correct. You don't make friends by tying up a woman & putting a red ball gag in her mouth." R: Reto-reversal.

old woman and she doesn't want anything to do with her past," remembers Blue. "Bettie hadn't surfaced yet, and she was really a myth at that time. I got the news in little bits and pieces of information, and I didn't know if it was true or not, or if it was just the rumor mill. In any case, once I felt very clear that it was true, that's when I really ended it. All of a sudden it crashes down on me that this just isn't a fun leon to be batted around, but it's a real person who has feelings, and so I literally just stopped.

"I wasn't interested in stepping on Bettie's shoes, only painting them. By that time, I had completed maybe 40 Bettie Page canvases. My career was spinning along quite nicely. After I stopped, my career was basically in shambles. What I had started—boom!—the superstar just got lopped off.



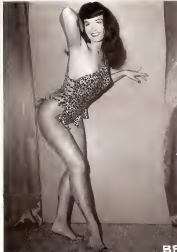
One of the things that I was keenly aware of, from 1980 to 1985, was that a lot of contemporaries of mine were out there just pumping away, making money on the deal. I really, at the time, wasn't grinding an ax. I really had feelings and respect for Bettie's privacy and I didn't care that other artists, contemporaries of mine, were capitalizing on it because it just wasn't me at the time. I didn't want anything to do with it. It actually freaked me out. I mean, I had no business just to pick up an image and do it, but Bettie's presence is so strong that I was blinded by the power of the Irving Klaw [fetish] imagery. I was a naive young artist that didn't know what he was doing."

Though a myriad of connoisseurs lamented the fade-out of Blue's bondage artwork, not everyone was

in mourning. The budding women's movement of the '70s had branded Blue as Public Enemy #1, accusing him of exploiting and demeaning women in his art. Blue's response to this attack? "Most artists want to be politically correct nowadays, and the problem with tying up women and putting a red ball gag in their mouth is that it really doesn't make a lot of friends," says the artist. "I had opposition from feminists, but what really seriously took me back was when my best friend asked me, 'Why do you treat women in your paintings like Nazis treated Jews?' That statement was another reason that I really put it to bed and I really didn't want anything to do with it."

"I mean, the paintings were so powerful that it had caused my best friend to say this. My best friend is a razor edge, counterculture-type person, a futuristic artist named Zox. I mean, he had majored in surreal poetry at Berkeley, and he was probably the most flipped-out artist that Venice, California has ever seen...and for him to be saying that to me, it was like I was totally out of touch with the world. I was living in my own adolescent, masturbation kind of fantasy world, and then trying to share it with the public. Big mistake, big mistake. If you're going to have fantasies, then keep 'em to yourself, but for God's sake, don't try to make everybody else believe in it."

"Anyway," Blue continues, "now when I'm attacked by feminists, I have gathered the ammunition to defend myself. The simple defense is this: Bettie Page was the model, she wasn't coerced or forced into it. In fact, she was a superstar doing it! The second thing is that Paula Klaw was the designer, the stylist, and the photographer. And number three is that the sales of the paintings benefit Bettie more than they benefit me. So at what point do you say



Blue: "I'm exploiting women? Bettie Page wasn't coerced into modeling. She was a superstar doing it. The sales of my paintings benefit her more than me."

I'm exploiting women? The fact of the matter is that there's plenty of women exploiting themselves. I simply turned it into painting."

"I gotta tell you this about the women's movement in America today: the leaders are weak and there is no movement. And the reason I say that is that people like me—just total out-of-it, little painter kind of people—are the people who get attacked. But when Revlon tells a woman to get up in the morning, a couple of hours earlier than men—and curl their hair and wear makeup and get the same wage as the guy who jumps in the shower and puts on a T-shirt and jeans—I mean, there's some heavy-duty exploitation going down. Revlon will sell women acrylic enamel to put on their finger nails and charge them \$10 for a bottle—of course, Revlon buys it from the

manufacturer in an oil drum that costs them \$3, and they make a profit that's so big and so had that it makes the robber hares look like TED MACK'S AMATEUR HOUR! But do we hear about that? No...

"What we hear about is Robert Blue tied up Bettie Page, put a red ball gag in her mouth and that's ridiculous! My paintings were designed for art shows. In those art shows, maybe 25 people show up, right? I'm not really changing the society or the earth. But because I'm accessible, I'm the guy that's getting attacked. Will the leadership ever go after Revlon or the fashion world or all the other truly greedy monster exploiters of women? I mean, look, don't get me started on women's liberation, because the women who are truly interested in kicking the chains off their wrists and ankles

"I'm accessible, so my paintings are attacked. But will feminist leadership go after Revlon, the fashion world & other corporate exploiters of women?"

need to go fight the ing hat-ties and stop playing pussy with even people like Hugh Hefner. It really gets me nuts. Their leadership is terrible, and I'll confront anyone head-to-head any time, any place, anywhere. They're just out of it!"

Shesh, sorry I asked! Why does Blue's Bettie Page renderings provoke such impassioned response? "I believe that if you're confronted with one of my paintings, that's of this huge scale, there certainly is this power," Blue explains. "There's power because the source is the incredibly powerful photographs; they're so wonderfully perverted that perverses would hide these photos under their head. It was secret stuff. And then you get someone like me that blows it up, and then throws it into a New York art gallery and puts it right in your face."

"I was hoping for some kind of chemistry to happen there, and obviously it has. Even after I stopped showing the Bettie Page artwork, and was consciously not promoting it, it just wouldn't go away. People like yourself would call me up—out of the blue!—and say, 'I want to interview you,' or 'Where can I get a golden age Robert Blue?' as though I was dead! It just wouldn't stop. What I believe that means, in the long run, is that the paintings do have magic. If they didn't, then people wouldn't be hectoring me."

More on Robert Blue
see page 56



Bettie retired from modeling after posing for "sunkissed" ads. The photographer, Edward Geyl, recalls her as "a lovely mermaid. It's as if she stepped out of the pages of those Swedish magazines that we used to sneak into school."

forced to perform oral sex on them. A traumatized Bettie returned home to Nashville, divorced Billy and eventually felt strong enough to move back to New York. Billy stalked her down at her apartment and threatened to kill himself if she didn't let him in. During the ensuing argument, he pulled out a knife and slashed the face of a neighbor who came to Bettie's aid. Billy finally gave up and left New York.

One October day in 1950, while walking along a Coney Island beach, 27-year-old Bettie caught the eye of a policeman and amateur photographer named Jerry Tibbs. She posed for him at his studio in Brooklyn, and it was there that Tibbs snapped Bettie's very first pin-up photos. It was Tibbs who suggested that Bettie cut herself some bangs to hide her large forehead. The rest, as they say, is history.

Bettie soon began posing for camera clubs, earning \$10 to \$20 per photo session. Amateur photographers would pay a fee for the privilege of taking pictures of pretty women in the sexually repressed 1950s. It quickly became apparent that Bettie had a certain indefinable something that the other models lacked. There was a vibrancy in her eyes, a full-on lust for life that radiated from her every pore and she enchanted all who saw her. At first, Bettie posed in sissy-bitty bikinis she sewed herself—a far cry from the modest beachwear that was de rigueur in those conservative times. Eventually, however, Bettie also began to pose nude. She's been quoted as saying, "I didn't feel uncomfortable about it. I never thought it was wrong to pose in the nude. God made Adam and Eve in the nude, and they lived in the nude in the Garden of Eden." However true that may be, commercial laws were legally barred from processing nude photos, lending an illicit air to the whole affair. Some of the

BETTIE PAGE

THE LAST PIN-UP

THE FINAL MONTHS BEFORE HER EXILE FROM THE MEDIA

BY ELLSWORTH BOYD

The year was 1957. I was life-guarding on the Ft. Lauderdale beach, one of a dozen Ocean City, Maryland Beach Patrol ramadas who made the sunshine state pilgrimage in the late '50s and early '60s.

There weren't many lives to save in the calm waters off this party town, immortalized by Glendon Swarthout's book, *Where The Boys Are*—adapted for the screen, starring George Hamilton, but there were parties aplenty with the beach as the focal point for getting acquainted. Pretty girls were as bountiful as seashells along the shoreline. But of all the girls I had seen in my six month beach tenure, none were more beautiful nor stunning than the one I met on that fateful day.

Word had spread like wildfire that Bettie Page, one of America's most beloved pinup models, was on the beach at Las Olas Boulevard, a main artery that connected with A-1-A, the scenic route along the ocean. I was about a half mile north of it in front of the Jelly Roger Hotel.

By late afternoon, the beach was emptying when a lone figure appeared, walking north at the water's edge, her striking bikini partially hidden by a sleeveless, waist length, see-through beach garment unbuttoned down the front. You didn't see outfits like this in the 1950s. This was a young man's dream come true. It was as if a fantasy figure had stepped out of the pages of one of the Swedish magazines guys brought to school in eighth grade.

On one hand, this was my lucky day, but on the other hand it wasn't. This was about the same time Captain Frank Dene, chief honcho of the beach patrol, made his motorized run on A-1-A, parallel to the beach. He made at least two runs a day to make sure all the lifeguards remained in their stations.

Bettie passed too far away for me to even say hello. I could only sigh and



I asked Bettie if I may shoot photos. "Sure," she said. "It poses for you. Putting a swim mask on her head, she modeled in her home-apron bikini. I'd gone to Heaven.

with the chief would make his last check-up for the day. The chief steered his car slowly through traffic—heading north, the same as Bettie—waiting to me as he passed. I had only one more obstacle before approaching, and hopefully talking to the most beautiful creature on earth. If the chief returned after his five mile check-up cruise, and Bettie returned at the water's edge, I would be in like Flynn. I would actually meet Bettie.

My heart pounded as the moments painfully passed and butterflies raced in my stomach. I eagerly glanced at the traffic, then to the water's edge, eyes glued to the north. Bettie must have walked two to three miles and the chief must have stopped to talk to somebody. The beach was sparsely populated, only a handful of bathers and sun wor-

shippers catching the late afternoon rays. My station sat high on a ridge of sand close to A-1-A where traffic was slow and sporadic.

At 4 p.m., there were no signs of either Bettie or the chief. At 4:15, still pishing and at 4:30, the beach and the road were almost empty. At 4:35 I saw her up the beach, almost a half-mile north. She must have walked at least four miles round trip, going at a pretty good pace. "Come on chief, where ARE you?" I said through clenched teeth.

I didn't care anymore. Chief or no chief, I was determined to walk to the water's edge and talk to her. If I got fired, so what? People would ask, "Why did you get fired?" And I would reply, "I got caught talking to Bettie Page." "Sure!" they would say, "Now tell us how you REALLY got fired."

Finally, I saw the chief. We waved and when he was out sight, I leaped from my station and raced to the water's edge. Bettie was about 300 yards away so I stood directly in line with her, hoping she'd pass real close.

I'm not sure how the conversation went, but I smiled and she smiled back. "How far did you walk?" I asked. "About two miles," she said, then asked how far the beach stretched south of Las Olas Boulevard. I answered, then introduced myself. She did the same. I told her I knew who she was and that I was a fan. I tried to be cool. She smiled.

Bettie was no different than any other friendly tourist, chatting amicably about everyday things. She was so nice the butterflies left my stomach and soon I was telling her about my best friend, Jim Kelly, also a lifeguard, and how on our day off we liked to go sneaking on a pretty coral reef near the shore in Lauderdale-By-The-Sea.

To this day, I can't believe my brushness when I gushed, "Would you like to

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shutterbugs, of course, were just in the camera club for the cheap thrills, and sometimes didn't even bother to put film in their cameras. The majority, however, had an eye for art, and recognized Bettie Page as one of the greats.

In 1951, a club photographer showed Bettie's photos to Robert Harris, publisher of *Wink*, *Tizler*, *Beauty Parade* and *Eyeful*. The "men's magazines" were considered scandalous at the time, though none of them showed nudity. Harris hired Bettie to pose in fantasy scenarios that lampooned comic book scenarios. Between the camera clubs and the magazines, thousands of photos of Bettie were snapped—more than Cindy Crawford and Marilyn Monroe combined. A vast number of these photos still survive today.

Bettie's ample proportions were as full of rich abundance as the preposterous decade, itself. This was not some Kate Moss-like waif. Nor did she have the perfectly taut, athletic physique of an Elle MacPherson or even Pamela Anderson's implanted bounty. Bettie's natural good looks appealed to Miami photographer Bunny Yeager, whom the model met while vacationing in Florida. The resulting shots of Bettie on the beach, and romping with a pair of leopards at a zoo, are considered by many to be among her best. Hugh Hefner bought some of Yeager's photos, and Bettie—posing in nothing more than a Santa cap and a smile—became *Playboy's* Playmate of the Month in January 1955. Later that year, she was crowned Miss Pin-Up Girl of the World by an eminent Broadway columnist on TV's EARL WILSON SHOW. But it was Bettie's bondage photos that made her a bona fide legend.

While many knew Bettie Page as the All-American Girl, few knew of her darker side which brooded S&M. In 1951, Bettie had started modeling for Irving Klaw,



Page poses for N. Y. photographer Irving Klaw, whose bondage photos of the model caused controversy, political condemnation & the decline of his health.

New York's pin-up/bondage sovereign, and his sister Paula. The siblings owned Movie Star News, a little shop that specialized in celebrity photos. It was in Klaw's diminutive studio that Bettie posed for hundreds of fetish photos. These ranged from the mildly daring fishnets and leather pictures to the more lurid spanking/whipping/tied-up-like-a-hog-at-Christmas shots. Often she posed with other women, and was as comfortable playing the submissive as she was the dominatrix. Her expressions were sometimes vampish, often playful, and she always looked like she was having the time of her life. Bettie never posed nude in these photos, and never

with men. The pictures sold to a small but voracious group of Klaw's special clients, and Bettie's reputation grew.

In 1953, Bettie's long-held dream of being a motion picture star came true, at least in part, when she appeared in a feature-length burlesque film called STRIPORAMA, produced by theater owner Martin Lewis and starring Lili St. Cyr. Footage of Bettie, clad in a white bikini and soaking in bubbles, was billed as "the most daring bath scene ever filmed." The movie was a hit. Inspired by its success, Irving Klaw filmed Bettie and St. Cyr in VARIETASE, which featured Bettie in a dance number. In 1955, Bettie appeared in an-

other Klaw production, TRASERAMA, in which she played a submissive apprentice who studies at the feet of burlesque stripper Tempest Storm. As far as Bettie was concerned, the movies and bondage photos were merely an elaborate game of dress-up, and utterly harmless. Not everyone agreed with her.

Bettie's secret life as a bondage pin-up was exposed when Estes Kefauver, a U.S. senator from Tennessee, decided to make a name for himself by waging war against "smut." He formed a senate subcommittee to investigate the supposed link between pornography and juvenile delinquency. Irving Klaw suddenly became public enemy #1. Bettie was called in to testify against her employer and friend, but she insisted that the bondage photos were not porn because no nudity or sex was involved. Klaw pleaded the fifth amendment, and Kefauver had to eventually drop the charges due to lack of evidence.

For the next two years, however, Irving Klaw and Bettie Page were continually harassed by various crusaders of morality. This had a negative impact on Klaw's health, and he eventually closed his doors and moved to New Jersey. To make matters worse, Bettie began receiving a series of typed letters threatening her life. The FBI, believing the letters were the work of an abusive serial killer, asked Bettie to abet them in the development of a trap. Using herself as bait, Bettie lured the stalker out into the open, where FBI agents quickly nabbed him. In the end, he turned out not to be a serial killer but a misguided 16-year-old boy with a very sick mind. Still, Bettie was sufficiently spooked to leave New York for good. In December 1957, Bettie Page packed her bags and disappeared from the limelight, turning her back on fame.

Ten years went by. Then twenty. Nobody knew what had become of Bettie Page.

"Bettie was 'Miss Pin-Up Girl of the World,' but bondage pix prompted her legend. She dismissed the fetishism as harmless; a U.S. senator disagreed."

Was she dreaming with the fishes in a pair of cement stilettos? Had she shaved her head and joined a cult, eking out a living selling daisies to Japanese tourists? As speculation grew increasingly more outlandish, the mystery of Bettie Page's disappearance took its rightful place in the hallowed halls of urban legend.

In the 1980s, comic book artist Dave Stevens effectively launched an all-out Bettie Page revival with *The Rocketeer*. Stevens' creation, which matched a black-haired beauty and a man who could fly, was dubbed by *The Village Voice* as "the greatest comic book in the world." The erstwhile pin-up model known as Bettie Page transformed into a pop culture icon, loved by a whole new generation of fans. Fantasy artist Olivia rendered Bettie's likeness

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Bridie Stevens posing as Page for Dave Stevens: "I spent a lot of time in weird positions, like bent over a sofa, so it would look like I'd been hung over the Rocketeer's shoulder."



9-curve diva Bridie Stevens' spreads as Bettie Page (1) included a French shoot for *New Look* magazine (2). She recalls ex-husband/artist Dave Stevens "developed a comic book story, based on our life together, titled *The Rocketeer*. He saw me as the perfect 'Bettie Page of the '80s' & I posed for all his art of the Bettie character. The comic was a big success."



BETTIE PAGE

ROBERT BLUE AND HIS BETTIES

AS A RESULT OF CONTROVERSY, THE ARTIST INSPIRES A
LAUDED MOVIE & STRIKES A COLLABORATION WITH PAGE.

BY LAURA SCHIFF



With his Bettie Page paintings shelved indefinitely, Robert Blue turned to representing the work of other artists. "I founded an art company, with a partner, called Davis Blue Artwork, and we published artists," he says. "I was responsible for managing the careers of 25 different artists. We had a poster and a limited edition company, and it was actually quite a hit. We produced some of the best-selling posters of the '60s. Later, we turned it into a silk screen printing company that printed limited editions for other artists. I never really produced anything in that time, as far as posters, in my own name."

It was also during the mid-'60s that director Bobby Roth (MIAMI VICE) penned a movie about Robert Blue's life. Called HEARTBREAKERS, the film starred Peter Coyote as a controversial young artist named Arthur Blue, whose gigantic paintings—of a trussed-up Bettie Page—buy him notoriety and the residual emotional consequences. Nick Mancuso

Blue externalized his hybridization of Bettie and B&O J. Being: "I was blinded by the power of Irving Klaw's [fetish] imagery. I was living my adolescent, masturbation kind of fantasy and trying to share it with the public."





"Even after I stopped showing the Bettie Page artwork [sic], and even considerably not promoting it, it just wouldn't go away," recounts Blue. "People would ask, out of the blue, for interviews. What I believe that means, in the long run, is that the paintings have magic & if they didn't, people wouldn't be bothering me."

so played Eli, Blue's best friend and competitor on the battle field of love. "Peter Coyote literally sat in my studio for two weeks, and he really picked up on me," reports the real-life Blue. "He did me so well that when I saw the movie I... I mean, I can't watch it. I've only seen it once, and it upsets me. He's nailed me so perfectly."

"I had a very good friend [Bobby Roth] and I knew that he was going to film school, but I had no idea that he was writing a movie about me. And he had another friend, Eli, a businessman who didn't know that Bobby was writing a movie about him. But, basically, the two friendships were separate, and what [Roth] did was simply put those two characters together. I wasn't really friends with the businessman. Eh, when



he saw the movie, was so upset he wouldn't talk to Bobby Roth. He was contemplating having his attorney talk to him. I mean, he was freaked out. I was freaked out. We didn't know that this was happening. I got a taste of what was happening, because they had to use my [Bettie Page] paintings as props in the movie."

"Why did they change the main character's name from Robert Blue to Arthur Blue?" I ask.

"They changed the name because there are certain things that happen in the movie—like the *ménage à trois* between Blue, Eli and the Carol Wayne character—that are fictional. It turns out that that this was a sexual escapade that Bobby Roth and other friends have had. The movie is loosely based on reality, but it's fic-

tional." [Peter Coyote, on the set of Barry Levinson's *SPHERE*, related, "My *HEARTBREAKERS* character was loosely and imaginatively based on a guy whose primary concern was the arts, as opposed to making money. Robert Blue drew Bettie Page to public attention. I knew who Bettie was, growing up in the '40s and '50s. I had seen some of her movies. I heard that she was all or in an institution."]

Debating to rave reviews, the film augmented Blue's notoriety just as Bettie Page suddenly came out of hiding. "I get a call from Bettie Page's agent, James Swanson, around three years ago. He says, 'Are you Robert Blue?' I say, 'Yes.' He says, 'Are you the fellow who painted Bettie Page?' I said yes. And then I say, very aggressively, 'I didn't make any money! Leave me alone! Go away!' And he said, 'No, we want you to start it up again.'"

Thus, Blue and Bettie Page were back in business—temporarily. "I carved a contract with [James Swanson] and Bettie for me to do 20 new paintings," says the artist. "I turned six of the paintings into limited editions: 110 each. After my seventh painting, Bettie's family fires Swanson and the whole limited edition deal basically is in litigation now. It was never realized. As far as I know, only about 35 of the six limited edition prints were ever signed and sold." [For all the dish that's fit to print regarding Bettie Page's legal troubles with James Swanson, check out my interview with Greg Thonkton, page 60.]

Blue now has an exclusive contract with Bettie Page, and there's no shady middleman to gum up the works. His paintings of the fetishized femme are available solely by commission, and only for those who can cough up enough dough to cover the hefty price tag—Blue's "new golden age" Betties sell for \$20,000 to \$100,000 apiece. If you're interested in checking out



Blue's idolatry of Page (200) was contrastually revealed ("I can paint Bettie the real of my life.") *HEARTBREAKERS*: Coyote, as Blue, w/ Kathryn Harrold



"Her agent asked me, 'Are you the Robert Blue who painted Bettie?' I said, 'I didn't make money. Go away!' He said, 'No, we want you to start again!'"

his "sane-Bettie" pin-up art, visit the California Gallery Of Art in Laguna Beach or San Luis Obispo's Mission Mall. Due to a long-standing feud between himself and *Los Angeles Times* art critic William Wilson, Blue does not exhibit his art in the City of Angels, his hometown. Says the artist, "There's this madman out here chopping heads, and I don't want to get near him. William Wilson hates my guts and I hate him."

Regarding his renewed



business negotiations, Blue has this to say: "I have an agreement with the Page family, which goes for an incredibly long time. It's good for me and good for Bettie. For the first time in my life, I really have an opportunity to do what I started back in the '70s. Now I'm free to paint Bettie Page for the rest of my life. For me, being an artist was always this idea of being free, and that's something that's really important to me. Freedom."

Food for thought from the man with a fondness for bondage.

Interested in contacting Robert Blue? Write to him at PO Box 211, 12400 Ventura Blvd., Studio City, CA 91604.

on everything from canvas to greeting cards (though today, Olivia is officially "sick of the whole Bettie Page thing," according to her husband Joel Berren). Madonna, that grande dame of media manipulation, adopted Bettie's racy look as her own, with the help of Jean Paul Gaultier's conical torqued bra. Fashion designers Todd Oldham and Chantal Thomas soon followed suit, bringing corsets, garter belts, and thigh-high leather boots out of obscurity and onto the runways of Paris. Models Shakom Harlow, Eva Herzigova, Claudia Schiffer, Christy Turlington, and even actress Demi Moore and Debi Mazar got in on the act. Everyone wanted a piece of Bettie Page's glamour and sex appeal for themselves.

And then, in 1993, Bettie Page resurfaced: very much alive, she was completely unaware of all the hoopla surrounding her supposed "disappearance." And she was at a loss to explain it. In a recent online interview with Bettie Page, sponsored by Compuserve and Mr. Showbiz, the former pin-up queen said, "I don't know why all kinds of memorabilia and books and posters have been selling about me during the last four or five

"In the '60s, Bettie's pictures rocked America, violating sexual taboos."
—Karen Essex & James J. Zusawski



BETTIE PAGE

REDISCOVERING THE LEGEND

EDITOR OF "BETTY PAGES" RECALLS CONSEQUENCES OF BETTIE'S REBIRTH.

BY LAURA SCHIFF

"I first discovered Bettie Page in 1962 or '63, when I was ten years old and living in Detroit," recalls Greg Theakston, editor of *Traze* Magazine. He's speaking to me from his home in Atlanta. "Years ago, my next-door neighbor Murphy called me up on a cold Sunday in February or March," recalls Theakston. "He said, 'Get over here right away.' I ran over there without my coat, and he led me into his father's study. He pulled open the bottom drawer of a bookcase, and shows me a stack of skin magazines about 12 inches high. My eyes popped out of my head. Murphy's parents were out of the house, and we were there alone with hundreds of pictures of naked women. But there was one woman who stood out. She went by her full name, which was not typical, so we knew that Bettie Page was somebody important. She looked energetic, youthful, pleasant, whereas some of the women in these magazines looked very hard and scary to our young eyes. Bettie always made us feel good."

Boys will be boys, and Theakston was no different from the rest of male Americans who had embraced Bettie Page as their own Queen of



Greg Theakston, editor of the bestselling *Betty Pages*, interviews with dwelling Bettie at the Golden Apple bookstore (L.A.).

Pin-up, but, unlike the other boys, Theakston eventually turned his adolescent fantasies into cold hard cash. A collector of comic books since the age of three—"I was attracted to the fantasy element in them"—Theakston entered the commercial art field as a teenager, painting covers for over 150 paperback books; he also illustrated a myriad of magazines, e.g. *National Lampoon*, *Looney Tunes*, *TV Guide*, *Playboy* and *Mad*.

In 1975, he founded his own company, Pure Imagination, and began publishing

reprints of classic comic strips, as well as books relating to the history of comics. "Ultimately, I ended up owning a print shop in Detroit and printing the books myself," he says. "Around early fall of '87, I ran into a friend of mine, Joe Anderko, and I said, 'I'm thinking about publishing something new. Do you have any ideas? Maybe we could do a pin-up thing.' And he said, 'Why don't we do it on Bettie Page?' At the time, Bettie was truly the cult figure. Very few people knew her name. There were a handful of comic book readers who had been following Dave Stevens' *The Rocketeer* comic for about three years. Bettie had been featured as a character in *The Rocketeer*. And because Dave made a splash with his work, people became aware of Bettie Page.

"But in the three years Dave drew his strip, nobody had come up with any of Bettie's photos. So here was this market that was crazy about this model and had never actually seen her picture, just renderings. So I decided it would be a logical, pre-made market. Dave wrote us a little piece for the first issue and allowed us to use his artwork, and it kind of segued over from there." Thus, *The Betty Pages* were born, a re-



Bettie Page's editor, Greg Theakston, was introduced to the brunette, back in 1962, via his next-door-neighbor's "stack of skin magazines" (left). Among hundreds of pictures of naked women, only Bettie Page stood out. She looked "exotic."

search magazine devoted to "The Tease From Tennessee" that was illustrated with black & white photos.

Because the digests were physically very small and easily palmed, they were generally placed near the front cash registers of the comic book shops, where the owners could keep an eye on them to discourage would-be shoplifters. This lent itself to impulse purchasing, and the first issue of *The Betty Pages* sold out in a couple of weeks.

For subsequent issues, Theakston, then living in New York, tried to scout out people who might have information pertaining to Bettie's early life, career, and current whereabouts. "But nobody knew a thing about her," he says. "She was a big question mark. I began with virtually nothing and, with only the vaguest of clues, I began to research the story of Bettie Page's life. It was quite a challenge. As I discovered information about Bettie, I revealed—in each issue—what

I had learned. That's one of the reasons the magazine came out so infrequently. I never made a lot of money at it, but I made enough to pay myself a salary."

The relative success of *The Betty Pages* allowed Theakston to pursue self-publishing full time. As the publication grew in popularity, he became the leading authority on the elusive pin-up queen, with his office serving as a kind of clearing house for information about Bettie Page. "The famous cheesecake photographer, Bunny Yeager, had contacted Bettie in the late '70s, by way of a classified ad. 'Bettie Page, call Bunny Yeager.' And Bettie called," Theakston says.

Yeager proposed publishing a book of Bettie's photographs, "but Bettie said, 'No. God wouldn't like that, and I'm very religious now and really don't want to do it.' And Bunny said, 'This guy, Gay Talese, is writing a book called *Thy Neighbor's Wife* about sexuality in America, and he wants to talk to you,

too.' And Bettie said 'No' to him, too. So I knew for a fact that Bettie was still alive and she did not want to be bothered. For this reason, I never contacted her family to try to find her. I didn't want to be seen as the guy who hounded Bettie Page, tracked her down like a convict and made her talk. So I always avoided the modern Bettie Page and concentrated on the retro version."

But it was Theakston who was responsible for turning Bettie Page out of her four-decade-long silence. While Dave Stevens' *The Rocketeer* kept Bettie's image alive in the comic book underground, Theakston's *Betty Pages* crossed the ex-model's visibility into a more mainstream audience.

Making the transition to still another medium, Bettie Page was introduced to television audiences. In 1993, Theakston was interviewed for an hour by Robin Leach, host of *LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND FAMOUS*. It was Theakston who ad-

"Her attorney drew up a contract that said I will never again speak to Bettie! And he told me that he now owned my interviews with Bettie!"

vised *LIFESTYLES* staffers to call Nashville reporter Tim Goldsmith, who had been conversing regularly with Bettie's brother, Jack Page.

Through Jack Page, *LIFESTYLES* eventually contacted Bettie and convinced her to break her silence. "The show sent Bettie a tape recorder and blank tapes with a list of questions," says Theakston. "They played back her answers during the ten or fifteen minute segment that they ran on her. And that was my signal from Bettie that she wasn't too bothered by the notoriety, so I sent her brother Jack a collection of *The Betty Pages*."

Jack Page forwarded Theakston's magazines to his sister. The following December, Theakston received a Christmas card from Bettie and an invitation for him to

Issue #1 of Theakston's digest: "Back then, Bettie was a big question mark. I began w/ only the vaguest of clues."



call her anytime. The two have been good friends ever since.

Following the LIFE-*STYLES* story, Jack Page decided that Bettie should hire a professional to represent her interests regarding compensation owed to her by the various artists who were capitalizing on her image. "There was this misconception that everyone was getting rich off of Bettie, and just ripping this old lady off," Theakston says. "We weren't trying to make a fast buck off an icon. We just simply didn't know where to send the money. Nobody knew where Bettie was."

Now that Bettie Page had resurfaced, agents volunteered—for a percentage of the profits—to collect the former model's cut of the merchandising profits. Bettie, however, was reluctant to be embroiled in Hollywood's representation game. In fact, she even rejected offers from Michael Ovitz's Creative Artists Agency, the most powerful talent management in the world.

Eventually, however, Bettie's brother Jack convinced her to sign with an attorney by the name of James Swanson, the man who orchestrated the Gamscoren Convention. "Swanson was like Jekyll and Hyde," Theakston says. "A really sweet



The *Betty Pages* forged a friendship between Page and editor Greg Theakston. "I never could have guessed that a peripheral part of my childhood—my fascination with Bettie—would become such an integral part of my adulthood."

man had suddenly turned into an a\$\$e. He demanded copies of my subscription list, an accounting of how many copies of the magazine I had sold, how many I sold over the table at conventions, give-away issues—every figure, every number in writing on his desk. He was a very difficult guy to deal with, very annoying.

"He even went so far as to draw up a contract for me, saying I will never speak to Bettie Page again. You simply can't contract my friendship with Bettie Page. I will not have that as part of the agreement. You can't make me never speak to her again! He was also telling me that he now owned my interviews with Bettie Page, and that I couldn't publish them in *The Betty Pages*. I had done eight or ten hours of interviews with Bettie, and she had given them to me. And now he was trying to control it, after the fact, by threatening me. Very unpleasant. It got to the point

where I would not talk to this guy, personally, anymore. But, ultimately, I did hash out a contract with him, via an intermediary, and virtually everyone who had ever done anything with Bettie paid a licensing fee, as far as I know. I paid Bettie, in care of Jim Swanson, five figures for her name and image."

A short time later, in 1994, Theakston lost touch with Bettie when she moved from the elderly group home where she'd been living in southern California. She left no forwarding address or phone number: "I was kind of left hanging. I didn't know where she was." Theakston feared that Swanson had poisoned Bettie against him. It was also around this time that Theakston ceased publishing *The Betty Pages*. "After I had interviewed Bettie and her husbands, there was nothing left to say. If I had done any more on Bettie Page, it really would have been exploiting her."

After a time, Theakston was able to track Bettie down again, and the two rekindled their old friendship over the phone. "I said to Bettie, 'I don't know what you heard about me but if you have a beef, let's clear it up right now.' And Bettie said, 'I understand that you're telling people that you're paying my rent.' And I said, 'Oh, no! I know how that got distorted. I told somebody that I hoped you were living in better conditions, based on the money that I sent you. Not that I was paying your rent, but I hoped that my money could pay for a better, more comfortable place for you.' And Bettie says, 'What money?' And I said, 'Well, you know, the money I sent to Swanson.' She said, 'He never told me you sent any money.' I said, 'It didn't appear on your statement sometime over the course of the year?' And she says, 'He never sent any statement.'"

Theakston, smelling a badly decomposing rat, sent Bettie copies of his canceled checks, validating that he had recompensed his "cover girl" with thousands of dollars that had been addressed to Swanson. "Bettie was fishbargained. Both she and Jack are nice country folk, and somewhat naive. I believe they were taken advantage of."

"Ultimately, they demanded their money from Swanson. Bettie needed some medical tests, and Swanson sent her the money for those. It's my understanding that Swanson collected as much as \$100,000 in her name. At this point, Bettie has only seen about \$15,000. As I understand it, Swanson was not supposed to spend Bettie's money without the written approval of both Bettie and Jack. Well, he never asked their approval for anything. He spent thousands of dollars of their money on who-knows-what."

Needless to say, Bettie and Jack Page gave James Swanson his walking papers. For a brief time after this, Bettie was represented by Robert Schultz, whose

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The *Betty Pages*, final issue: "There was nothing left to say if I'd done more, I would have risked exploiting Bettie."



"The producers came to the studio to pose with the whip & me as Bettie. Some were afraid the shots would end up in The Hollywood Reporter."

years. I just don't know why."

So what had she been up to these past 40 years? It turns out that while everyone in the world was out looking for Bettie Page, Bettie Page found Jesus. She attended Bible college and did missionary work. She remarried three times. And she never saw a penny from anyone who was very handsomely profiting from her image. Today, a 74-year-old Bettie Page lives off her social security checks in Los Angeles. She avoids the press, saying she wants people to remember her as the

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R: "I was never the girl-next-door," insists Page. **R:** Posing for Sobot, a man's magazine, her "voluptuous curves ripped thru layers of repression."



CHRISTA GOES BETTIE

**FROM A CHASTE PAGE
TO A BUSTIER-CLAD
COMIC BOOK KILLER.**

BY LAURA SCHIFF

It takes a pin-up model to play a pin-up model. At least that was the rationale behind E! Entertainment's casting of Christa Campbell as the title femme in *BETTIE PAGE: FROM PIN-UP TO SEX QUEEN*...that and the fact that Campbell is a dead ringer for the reigning Miss Pin-Up Girl of the World, a detail that does not go unnoticed by the movie makers of this new biopic. Pin-up



the, just a girl when I was
viewing her. I, a hipster,
generally have a jaded been-
there-done-that attitude when
it comes to spotting beautiful
young starlets in public. Well,
someone obviously forgot to
close in the gawking specta-
tors of this establishment;
every five minutes there's
some other guy interrupting
us to vie for her attention. I
haven't heard so many whis-
tles and cat calls since I last
visited the San Diego Zoo. Ap-
parently, this is just another
average day in the life of
Christa Campbell. "I went in-
to E! for my audition, and the"



Christa Campbell reprises her title role, as E! Entertainment's BETTIE PAGE, FROM PIN-UP TO SEX QUEEN, for TV photographer Jan Sene and stylist Elena Placio. "I attended the audition, and the producers were like, 'God! It's Bettie!'"

"Producers of E!'s Bettie Page film said, 'We're not looking for a '90s pin-up model.' They wanted sweet but sexy. And that's why I got the part."

producers were like, 'Oh, my God. It's Bettie!' she says, stifling a yawn. "With my clip-on bangs I looked just like her. Everyone was flipping out."

Campbell's own pin-up career began when she was in high school. "I started doing beauty pageants for swimwear and Miss English Leather, and I was winning," she says. "And then I met a photographer from Los Angeles, who kind of took me under his wing, and started shooting me and the pictures sold like crazy." Landing pin-up deals with

L: "My pin-up experience really came in handy for Bettie," says Campbell. R: As a psychic assassin in *ALICIA*. PROJECT: "Total women, after boy."



Funky Posters and Star Makers, Campbell moved to Los Angeles. Between modeling gigs, she pursued drama lessons. "But the more acting I did, the more boring the modeling became. I don't want to take anything away from the modeling industry, but it just didn't stimulate me anymore. Acting's more of a challenge, putting yourself out there and constantly getting rejected. It was a matter of growth, and I liked where the acting was taking me as a person."

One of the first L.A. projects that Campbell tackled was *EMBRACE OF THE VAMPIRE* (3-4). "I was one of the vampires in a dream sequence, but they actually ended up cutting my scene because it just didn't work with the rest of the movie," she admits with a trace of disappointment. "The film, which starred Alyssa Milano, was not a big release—I mean, it went straight to video—but it's one of those cult films that everyone has seen, you know? It's too bad my scene was cut, but that's fine. I knew there would be others."

The fledgling actress was subsequently engaged for a bunch of small screen roles, including the USA network's *PACIFIC BLUE* and HBO's *CONFESSIONS*: in "The Painter," one of the latter series' episodes, Campbell was assigned "a supporting role as the confidante to a woman who is cheating on her husband with a house painter. I turned down the lead role because it required nudity. I then played the love interest to lead actor Jim Davidson in two episodes of *PACIFIC BLUE*. Our characters meet when my purse is snatched by a dog. Did you know that they really have these dogs that are specially trained to steal purses? I worked with one of these dogs on the set, and it was amazing."

But El offered Campbell



Campbell as Bettie Page. "I acted out every major scene, every big change in her life. For the audition, I wore clip-on bangs & a dress that showed a little bit of cleavage."

the more significant role as Bettie Page. "It was a two-hour movie/documentary. They showed actual photos of Bettie, and then I played scenes from her life. There isn't a lot of actual footage of her: they have still photographs and that's basically it. So I acted out every major scene, every big change in her life. My pin-up experience really came in handy."

"For me, modeling isn't about sex. I feel a lot of my photographs are fun and sexy, not vampsy. Some girls

give you that hard look, but that's not my thing. And I don't think that was Bettie's thing, either. The producers at El said to me, 'We're not looking for a pin-up model of today.' They were looking for a girl who was more refreshing, that isn't hard. Sweet but sexy. So I think maybe that's why I got the part."

Not unlike Bettie Page, who crossed over into comic books via Dave Stevens' *The Rocker*, Campbell's has been rendered into a sexy, illustrated heroine. The

Ministry of Film's *Aurora Project* (formerly *Sage*) incarnates the next millennium's vision of a femme fatale. "The first sketches are finished and have been colored, and now they're writing the story," says Campbell. "Aurora is a fighter, kind of like LA FEMME NIKITA. She's bright and she's psychic and she's been trained to kill. She's this great warrior assassin who does martial arts and has a gun."

"She's a real woman, who's beautiful with a great bod. I'm looking at the pictures of myself as Aurora and I'm going, 'God!' They've drawn me in this black bustier bra that's really hot. There's another one of me in a cropped top and pants like you'd see in *BARB WIRE*. I call it the 'Outfit of Death,' even though Aurora is basically a good person. She only kills when she has to. The Ministry of Film is sending me to Chicago's big comic book convention so I can sign autographs. I'm like, 'Am I supposed to wear this outfit?'" If the crowd in Chicago is anything like the denizens of this place, they'd be wise to hire extra security guards in riot gear.

Next up for Campbell is a featured role in *CAFE AMERICA*, an independently produced film written and directed by ALL MY CHILDREN actor Kristoff Johnson. "It takes place in a restaurant," she explains. "It's all these little stories—you focus in on this table, you focus in on that table—and there's this waitress who's serving everyone, and she leads us to the different mini-dramas that are going on at each of these tables. I play a college girl who has 'man troubles.' All of the stories intertwine at the end. The script is amazing. I can't wait to start filming!"

Let's hope it's on a closed set. □



N.Y. actress Gwyneth Paltrow (GYN WITHIN) in her homage to Bettie Page: "I've posed as the most explosion of sexual liberation, including Karpisella and Bettie. The difference is that Bettie is moved in reality. She had guts."

the bikini-clad ingenue. She still sports her signature bangs.

A trio of documentaries chronicling Bettie's life have been fueling the Page craze of late. Last May, E! Entertainment Television broadcast **BETTIE PAGE FROM PIN-UP TO SEX QUEEN**, a two-hour bio that included interviews with Irving and Paula Klaw, Bettie's brother Jack Page, artist Dave Stevens and the elusive title femme herself (shot in silhouette to conceal her identity). Key turning points in Bettie's life were reenacted by actress Christa Campbell. Formerly a presence on the USA Network's **PACIFIC BLUE** and **CONFESSIONS**, Campbell recalls her audition for the part of Bettie Page: "I wore clip-on bangs and a dress that shows a little bit of cleavage. They actually had me posing with all the producers in the room. They were just sitting there staring at me with their hands folded while I'm doing these poses against the wall, the table. And then I tripped over the telephone cord, in the middle of it all, because I'm kind of klutzy. And the producers were staring at me with these straight faces and they were like, 'Thank you very much. You can go now.'"

Despite this less-than-auspicious introduction, Campbell landed the plum role: "E! is owned by Disney, so they wouldn't let us do a lot of the risqué stuff that Bettie did in the '60s. You know, there were some photos of her with a ball in her mouth and her hands and legs tied up. The executives were very on edge as to what we could show, what we couldn't. So we had to do the 'lite' version. I couldn't be tied up or tie anybody else up. But we had the rope and we had the fetish outfits. I did a little dance number where I was swinging this whip around, and it was all very borderline. But you should have seen the place as soon as the cameras stopped rolling. Everyone at E! was like, 'There's a Bettie

BETTIE PAGE

CAROLYN DOES BETTIE

CAROLYN RENEE SMITH, PLAYBOY MODEL CUM MOVIE ACTRESS.

BY BRUCE G. HALLENBECK

Carolyn Renee Smith is a New York-based actress who posed for us as the immortal Bettie Page. The starlet performed work as an extra on productions shot regionally, including *JERRY MAGUIRE*. Her most memorable gig? Probably a Benny Hill show that was taped in Florida. "He had come over from England to do a syndicated TV show, and he picked me to do a hula skit with him. Six months later, he had his first heart attack. And a few months after that, he passed away. He was extremely intelligent. And he was so nice to me, so encouraging. He told me that he wrote his own shows, and he had never had himself in mind to play that character. He ended up playing it himself because he couldn't find anybody else to do it."

Upon playing second banana to other comics, including Larry "Bud" Melman and Pauly Shore, Smith landed a speaking role in an independent film shot under the working title, *EXCESSIVE FORCE*. "Every movie I've been in seems to have had a title change!" Smith laments. "That film premiered on HBO, last year, as *EXECUTIVE TARGET*. But that movie was cool. Michael Madsen played the lead, I played a dancer. It was nice to be working a little more closely with principal actors instead of being an extra."

She was even more elated about the expanded visibility of her role in *DISTORTED BOUNDARIES*, marketed as a generic erotic thriller: "Now it's titled *EROTIC BOUNDARIES*, and I'm really pissed-off about that! I play a social-climbing sociopath who wants to get somewhere in life. She's a secretary to this guy whom she ends up seducing. A lot



Carolyn Renee Smith poses as Page for *FF* photographer Duane Pelecia. "Once I understood Bettie was larger than life, I knew how to portray her for the shoot," says Smith.

of sexual games ensue. What's cool about this role is that my character flips out. She has this buried anger. She's not a nice character, but she doesn't think she's evil.

"My nudity—love scenes are critical to the story—were tasteful. Of course, I'd rather not be naked in front of a dozen people but it's just one of those things you have to do. By the way, I also played a dual role in an incomplete indie called *TWO JULIES*. We'll see if it ever gets finished."

Smith's physique and sultry persona, which graced the pages of *Playboy*, qualified her to model as *femmes*

fatales *Vampirella* (8&6) and Bettie Page. "But I'm not quite as filled out as Bettie," smiles Smith. "She was perfect for her time, now she might be considered a little heavier than the standard. I referred to a book and related articles to study her. I read an interview with one of her friends in which she said Bettie overdid things. Once I understood that Bettie Page was larger than life, I knew how to portray her in the photo shoot. I love Bettie, but I don't want to be typed into her look-a-like."

During a summer day's shoot, she shifted from Vamp's trademark dental floss costume to Bettie's lingerie: "I had to change wigs but it was a lot of fun. It's easier to play *Vampirella*, in a way, because you pretty much make her the way you want: she's not a real person, so you can be as flamboyant as you need to be."

Now that she's developing some genre celebrity, what are Smith's goals? "I want to keep learning and keep growing," she replies. "When you're not born into the business, and you're not related to someone who's already established, it's hard to get a foothold. Those who have established themselves—like Sylvester Stallone—have taken control of their destinies by getting into the production end. That's what I'm trying to do, establish my own production company with a number of other people. I want to get behind the camera."

Until then, Smith is acquiescing herself as an actress. As we wrap the interview, she's called back to the set of *THE EVIL WITHIN*, a supernatural thriller in which she stars. "And I'm not required to flash any skin." One of the film crew—bearing Smith's closing line—audibly mutters, "Rats!" □

Page on the second floor? All these people came down to the studio to see me as Bettie. Everyone was just going crazy. Robert Wagner came in to meet me and, of course, I was in the leather stuff at that time. Eventually, a lot of the big producers at El came in to the studio and posed with the whip and stuff. Some of them were afraid their photos would end up in the *Hollywood Reporter*!

"The thing I like best about Bettie Page," Campbell continues, "is that she was just wild. Innocent but wild. And she just did it. She didn't care about what people were thinking. You know, she just lived her life and didn't worry about anything. If she wanted to go nude on a beach, she would go nude on a beach. That was Bettie. She did what she wanted to do. I mean, nowadays, we've got the woman who's individual and that's today's woman. Well, back then, it wasn't today's woman. It was the future's woman. Bettie was just way ahead of her time. That's what made her."

Not to be evasive, femme fatale Julie Strain will be starring in an authorized documentary for Single Spark Pictures called **LOOKING FOR BETTIE PAGE**. "I didn't even know Bettie Page's name when I



Page in her best: "I was not trying to be shocking, or be a pioneer, I wasn't trying to change society, I didn't think of myself as liberated. I was just myself."

first saw her paintings," Julie recalls. "On my twenty-sixth birthday, me and all my friends took some Qualudes or something and drove to this head shop where they sold incense, and they had this Olivia card rack. We were just mesmerized by this rack of cards with these beautiful images of women. I bought all the Bettie Page cards and pinned them up on my wall. I didn't have much money at the time, I had to spend every dime on wardrobe and car phones and head shots, but I was always surrounded by Bettie Page calendars and greeting cards. To be painted by Olivia was a dream of mine at the time."

That dream came true, and one day, while signing autographs at an Olivia gallery event, Strain was approached by Single Spark producer Mark Mori about

appearing in the project. "I said, 'Of course, I'll do it! And not only that, I will do it for free out of the love of Bettie, and the proceeds can go to either you or Bettie or someone else who's out there working hard. I mean, it's a piece of cake. It's probably two or three days of work, going into clubs and interviewing Bettie Page look-alikes, and then dressing up as Bettie myself and doing a photo shoot for *Femme Fatales* and *Single Spark*."

At her Los Angeles home, Strain opens a copy of Page's biographical book and proudly points to a personalized message inscribed on the inside cover: "It's you who keeps the flame of pin-up beauty alive today. Thanks for remembering me—Bettie Page." Strain continues: "When the people at Single Spark gave me this book, it was Bettie's

"Bettie was innocent but wild. If she wanted to go nude on a beach, she'd do it. Nowadays, we've got 'today's woman.' She was the future's woman."

way of asking me to work on her documentary. She kind of realized that somebody was following behind in her footsteps who was big enough to take on that entity, and she was almost relieved. I mean, there's Marilyn Monroe, who's dead, and there's Bettie Page, who's still alive and incredible, and there's Julie Strain, who's still out there pushing out more product and taking more pictures. There's nobody who could come along and put together that mass quantity and widespread body of work that I've done."

I laugh from the sheer immediacy of what Strain just said. You gotta love this gal for her sheer brassiness if nothing else. "I'm just a marketing machine," proclaims Strain after I've picked myself up off the floor. While this is undeniably true, it is also true that part of Bettie's appeal was that she was totally naive when it came to capitalizing on her assets, and it was her innocence that came across in her photos and captured the heart of a nation. To this day, Bettie remains the never set out to cause such a stir. Strain, on the other hand, has "a publicist who's pumping it out faster than I can even keep up with. I'm exhausted from it." Maybe she shouldn't try so hard.

A footnote: *Single Spark*, which owns the rights to Page's life story, plans to make a feature film about the pin-up "some time in the future."

HBO almost jumped on the bandwagon with another Bettie Page documentary

Pumping pulp fiction with her publicist, Page—her career peaking—posed for *Elly Queen* magazine.





Bettie Page poses for 3-D films photographed at the Camera Club (June 1954). "The previous year's **HOUSE OF WAX** made people even more aware of 3-D, encouraging the sale of still life spin-offs," says stars' biographer George Storer. "And Bettie's curves served the 3-D format extremely well."

pitched by producer Christine Vachon (OFFICE KILLER, I SHOT ANDY WARHOL). Guinevere Turner (CHASING AMY, GO FISH) was cast as Bettie. However, a publicist for the cable channel, who requested anonymity, informed me that "the deal is off. Vachon will be producing the documentary on her own and seeking distribution elsewhere. Her Bettie Page project was just one of many that was being considered for our '98 lineup. HBO has decided to pass on it." (Ms. Vachon, out of the country at press time, was unavailable for comment.) Nevertheless, the message is immutable: Both Vachon and Turner are outspoken lesbians, a testament to Bettie's crossover appeal. Interviewed for *El's* Page story, Turner noted, "You look at Bettie and you can tell that she doesn't realize how adorable she is. And there's also something about lost innocence. When you look at pictures of Bettie, you realize that nobody looks like that now. Nobody is that fresh."

Of course, that's not going to stop anyone from searching for the next Bettie Page. Dream on, guys—they just don't make 'em like the original. □

Bold, a "men's magazine," jumped on the Bettie burlesque. Drew Moore & Madonna imitated Page's persona.



BETTIE PAGE

QUEEN OF BURLESQUE

BONDAGE/BUMP N' GRIND: HER BRIEF FILM CAREER IN 8MM AND GRINDHOUSE FLICKS.

BY DAN SCAFFEROTTI

The global resurgence of interest in '30s pin-up Betty Page has resurrected a subgenre that had been mothballed into nonexistence: we're talkin' the burlesque film, which tantalized male viewers during the Eisenhower decade. Shot on budgets that would have humiliated Ed Wood, these revues were engaged in art houses and skid row theatres. The New York impresarios of this grindhouse fare was Irving Klaw whose second floor walkup, on 14th Street, was a photo shop: fans satiated their appetite for Hollywood glamour by purchasing 8x10 glossies of the stars. The pin-up was the heart of his business and Klaw photographed dozens of bombshells, including reigning strippers Tempest Storm, Lili St. Cyr and Elaine Starr. Unlike her contemporaries, Bettie Page was short on sultry, but sustained a surfeit of wholesomeness: she epitomized the girl next door.

Transcending the restrictions of stiff life, Klaw's pin-ups were particularly animated in a series of 8mm short films. The photos and home movies were inventoried for periodically issued catalogues. The filmed product was routinely static: a head-line dancer humped a'grind on a set that was nothing more opulent than a drab curtain. Page—grazing in abbreviated costumes com-

posed of high heels, underwear and garter belt—performed in quickies equally deficient of production value and subtle titles. *Joyful Dance* By Betty, *Betty's Cloze Dance*, *Dream Dance* By Betty, *Dance of Passion*, *Tantalizing Betty Dances Again* and, my personal fave, *Betty's Hat Dance*. While Page's chorine abilities were a bit awkward, her anatomic prowess was perfection.

More on the bizarre side were Klaw's bondage optics: short, silent VIGNETTES featuring woman abducted and tied into impossible positions. By today's standards, it's subdued fetishism with a "spanking" payoff. Page could be found on either side of the bondage board. As the victim, she's knocked out with an unconvincing karate chop, tied up by a pair of women and carried off. But Page turns the tables in *Ramble Seat Bondage*: Page and another woman kidnap a damsel, tie her up, dump her in a car trunk and drive her out to the woods where they tie her to a

tree. It's one of few B&D loops that Klaw shot outdoors.

Klaw's catalogue includes "Movie #89," *Captured Jungle Girl*, which features Page in her signature leopard-skin bikini and panties. Model Sima Coire captures Page and bonds her, spread-eagled, to a wild rig that lifts her off the floor. Existing copies of the fetish films—superior to surviving but flawed prints of Page's dance shorts—are compiled in Volumes I & II of IRVING KLAWS BONDAGE CLASSICS.

In 1963, theatre owner Martin J. Lewis produced *STRIPORAMA*, Page's debut in a feature-length film. It was substantively more ambitious than the 8mm no-brainers. Filmed in Eastman color and starring burlesque luminaries Lili St. Cyr and Georgie Southern, the film's framing device takes a post-shot at censorship committees that sat in judgment of "adult" films. The *Premier* The Council For The Preservation of Culture decides not to include burlesque in a

TEASERAMA: Feigning shock over her billing of, Page whips into her routine.



time capsule project. This angers a trio of hacky pants comedians who are so low-brow they make Pinky Lee look like Noel Coward. These vaudevillian rebels invade the offices of the counsel and force them to watch examples of burlesque shows. That'll teach them.

The historic significance of STRIPORAMA is that it marks the first time Page actually articulated dialogue on-camera. Here's the setup: comics Mandy Kay and Jack Diamond are asleep in a small room. A large poster of Betty Page envelopes the back of a door. Suddenly, Page makes an entrance and describes herself as "An illusion. Of course, I'm real. Feel me. Touch me. Hold me. Caress me. Embrace me." As the two men move to grab the lovely vision, she disappears and they end up embracing each other (Waa-aaa-waaa-aaaaa). Aside from its antiquity, the sequence is marred by the presence of a boom shadow on the wall. Later, Page takes a bubble bath in a harem sequence. Two hand-maidens help her out of her harem girl outfit. Lots of soap suds, minimal water.

Irving Klaw graded-out a full-length film with 1954's VARIETEASE. Lili St. Cyr was the draw and, once again, Page donned a harem girl outfit for her dance number. She diverts a series of varied colored veils which are draped down her back. While other strippers in these films deadpan their way through their schtick, Page's face actually draws attention away from her body. With a wink and a smile, she embellishes her take-it-off obligations with panache. Perhaps best of the three for Page aficionados is TEASERAMA, produced and



"Striptease! Betty Page was a real life version of the good-girl-gone-bad story typical of pinuphouse fare," Goldhouse writers, Eddie Muller and Daniel Fink.

directed by Klaw in 1955. Page slips into a different costume each time she introduces an act by lifting a sign with the performer's name on it. As the overture to Tempest Storm's showpiece, Page comes out in an abbreviated French maid's outfit and 6" stiletto heels. The red-headed Storm awakens, curls out of bed before her maid, Page, enters and helps her dress. Later, Page hauls-up a card

inscribed with her own name. Feigning surprise, she coyly points to herself before launching into a striptease.

Lurid for the day, these films were used as filler between the strip acts, comedians—including CAR 54, WHERE ARE YOU? "Baby, Joe E. Ross ("Ooh, ooh, France")—drop leaden jokes.

Dan Sonney, a California film distributor, bought the west coast rights to Klaw's films. A producer of low budget burlesque films himself, Sonney also sold rights to his own films to Klaw for his territory. Burned by government charges in 1963, which accused him of abusing the mail to solicit lewd material, Klaw decided to junk most of the negatives to his stills. He sold the

"Unlike strippers Tempest Storm and Blaze Starr, girl-next-door Page was short on 'sultry' but sustained a surfeit of wholesomeness."

rights to STRIPORAMA, TEASERAMA, and VARIETEASE to Sonney. "I bought the negatives to those three films outright," said Sonney. "By the time that we bought them, they were already old. The reason I bought these old movies was that I had a couple of skid row theaters on Main Street in Los Angeles and I would keep bringing them back." Yielding to a pitch by Something Weird Video honcho Mike Vraney, producer Dave F. Friedman bought the rights to the three burlesque films from Sonney. He subsequently licensed the trilogy to Something Weird—purveyors of 80s softcore entertainment—for video distribution. (Order from Something Weird video, P.O. Box 3364, Seattle, WA 98133, phone 206-381-3750). □

Page lipsticks top half of TEASERAMA poster; though only a strip & sultry water reveal, censors fumed.



L: Page's veil dance in VARIETEASE. R: With Tempest Storm in TEASERAMA.





'50s *Frotica*

NUDIE PIONEER DAVID FRIEDMAN

THE SOFTCORE SOVEREIGN, WHO FUELED AN EMPIRE ON SEX AND VIOLENCE, RECOUNTS HIS ODYSSEY (1960-1972).

By DAN SCAPPEROTT

Russ Meyer, Harry Novak, and Dave Friedman: they're unsung movie pioneers who blazed a trail into an uncharted cinematic wilderness, frequently with a can of film in hand and a sheriff—waving a cease & desist order or an arrest warrant—on their tail. The nation's sexual revolution was still a few years away when these intrepid showmen gathered up the nerve to show a bare breast on screen.

During the '60s, Friedman was a rebel showman—think of an urban Mr. Dark—who transgressed provincial America's "family values." His legacy is sex and violence. He not only separated starlets from their bikinis—full-frontal nudity was branded as morally subversive during Friedman's reGENCY—but satiated screens with enough entrails to make drive-in attendants roll down car windows and barf up their popcorn (see, back then, "violence" was nothing more graphic than a show-



Friedman, posing w/ Christine Hart on the set of *JOHNNY RINGO*, designed the pressbooks for his films (sample *SEE FREAK*, facing). Right: License to Thrill: David P. Friedman & his film empire, Entertainment Ventures, Inc.

down on GUNSMOKE).

Ballyhoo was his business. Friedman could compete with the big boys because TV and mainstream Hollywood were in denial of his cameras, sex and violence. "I was too lazy to work and too nervous to steal," quipped the now retired producer. As a boy, Friedman hung around Alabama theatres that his family owned. Before World



War II attired him in a uniform, he had worked in the Buffalo office of Paramount Pictures. Just about the same time that Russ Meyer was tallying experience as a cameraman in combat, Friedman was in a New Jersey signal school making training films for the Army.

After the war, Friedman picked up a batch of army surplus searchlights. One of

his customers turned out to be Howard W. "Kroger" Babb, an early distributor of exploitation films including the campy "sex hygiene" saga, MOM AND DAD. Babb offered the fledgling entrepreneur a job, but Friedman spied to return to Paramount. Working out of Chicago, he was promoted to head of publicity for the studio's Midwest division.

By 1955, Friedman was ready to move into a more lucrative territory. He became reacquainted with Babb who, along with a partner, organized Modern Film, a company that cosed a profitable subgenre.



"These were the pictures that showed the birth of a baby and then that horrible venereal disease film after it," Friedman explained. "This intrigued me because I was a curvy at heart. I went with them and became an associate. Later, when Babb fell on hard times, I bought his share of the company."

The search for independently produced films prompted Friedman's pilgrimage to Hollywood, where he developed a partnership: "Herschell Gordon Lewis came into my office and said, 'I'm making a picture' and I said, 'Well, get in line.' But he persisted and

DAVID F. FRIEDMAN

"SPACE THING is the only picture ever made that makes PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE look like CITIZEN KANE. The effects were ridiculous. It's just terrible but it did terrific business."



F. Friedman records sound for (THE ADVENTURES OF) LUCKY PIERRE, a 1961 movie which he produced and co-wrote. © STARLET (68), about a filmmaker who takes his product for girls' houses, was shot at Monogram Studios. L. COLOR ME BLOOD RED (68) cosponsored the Friedman/Herschell G. Lewis "gore" trilogy—not to mention their partnership.



said, 'I'm different. I've got the money' and I said, 'Well, sit down, sir.'"

The union was launched in 1960 when Friedman released Lewis' film, PRIME TIME, a melodrama that's memorable only as Karen Black's film debut. "Karen was still a student at Northwestern," said Friedman. "She was a very pretty girl. This was a juvenile delinquent picture with bad girls, and I talked her into doing a nude swimming scene. We were shooting in this quarry outside of Chicago. She reluctantly did it. The next day her boyfriend, manager, whatever, came and said, 'Gee, Karen has had second thoughts about this and, if you wouldn't use it, I'd pay for another day's shooting and I'll get you another girl. I readily agreed and I said to Herschell that we may not have to release the picture at all. We could sell it back to the cast."

"Karen didn't have anything much to do in this picture but I used her photo in the ads because she was, by far, the most attractive young lady in the cast. When we opened, she went on the road in a couple of spots to promote the picture. After she graduated, she went to New York, got into a show, and got fabulous reviews and went off to Hollywood."

The following year, while publicizing Lewis' LIVING VENUS, Friedman was introduced to burlesque queen Rose LaRose. The owner of a downtown theatre in Toledo, Ohio, the stripper invited Friedman to screen movies between live acts. Then she dropped her own sales pitch. "If you can make some shorts with pretty little girls running around nude or semi-nude," LaRose told Friedman, "I can use them. And every other burlesque theatre in the country can use them." Friedman quickly assessed the possibilities, and asked Lewis for a budget estimate on 10-minute shorts.

"So we shot six or seven little vignettes," recounted

...an. "I said, 'Let's put them together and make a feature.' So Herschell and I invested \$3,500 apiece and we made the picture in color, on 35mm, for \$7,000.

But he and I were the whole crew! I was the producer and soundman. Herschell was the director and cameraman. We picked up this second rate stand-up comic, named Billy Fulbe, and I found some girls around Minneapolis and Chicago. None of them were anything to look at.

"We made a picture called **THE ADVENTURES OF LUCKY PIERRE** [1961]. This was the third of the nudie-cutie films. Russ Meyer had made **THE IMMORAL MR. TEAS** and Ted Demme had made **NOT TONITE, HENRY**, but **LUCKY PIERRE** was the third of the nudie cuties and it was in color. Now these pictures were as rigid in their construction as a medieval morality play. They were all based on the fact that a guy, through magic glasses or hallucination or something, could see naked girls that other people couldn't see. So this \$7,000 picture brought us back \$150,000 inside of 20 weeks."

In a ground-breaking decision, New York State censors had just passed a "nudist colony picture" called **GARDEN OF EDEN**, which



Burlesque star, Virginia "Big Doo" Bell. "She was an old friend of mine," recalls Friedman. "In 72 hours, we made a film in Florida called **BELL, BARE & BEAUTIFUL**. We made **BLOOD FEAST** 24 hours later at much of the same cost."



Karen Black made her film debut in *PRIME TIME*: "I talked her into doing a nude scene. Next day, her boyfriend says, 'If you don't see that scene, I'll pay for another day's shooting. I'll get you another girl.' I tell my partner, 'We may not have to release this film—we can sell it back to the east.'"

opened up a floodgate of opportunity for idea purveyors. Picking their bags, Friedman and Lewis made a bee-line for sunny Florida. "I found a nudist colony, set up and made a picture called *THE DAUGHTER OF THE SUN*," said Friedman. "We found the most gorgeous girl who was ever in any exploitation picture, a girl

named Rusty Allen and she was a real redhead. With that, we were off and running."

The mini-budgeted quickies, shot in less than one week, grossed big bucks. The two filmmakers were engulfed with financing offers. Tom Dowd, a Chicago theatre owner, was among the first to hop on the band-

wagon: Friedman produced a string of nudie cuties that expanded Dowd's business. Stan Kolberg, another Windy City exhibitor, owned a chain of drive-ins and offered the producer another package. "He said, 'Anything you guys want, just come over here and pick up the check.' So I took him up on it," recalled Friedman. "In these days, anything you could do to get out of Chicago in the winter, you did."

"So we went back to Florida and made *SCUM OF THE EARTH*, which was the first black and white roughie. That's a term that I invented. Instead of a fun little nudie in color, this thing had a serious story to it and a little bit of skin—but it had more violence. Herschell and I had the idea to put it in black and white, make it more grainy like an old-fashioned stag film, make it look like some of this stuff coming in from Europe that was all dark

and lugubrious. It was about a guy who was getting high school girls to pose nude. It was very successful and created a whole new genre of film."

Bored with the routine of charming out "nudies," Lewis and Friedman conceptualized a new genre to ballyhoo. "We were kicking it around and up came the magic word—'gore!'" said Friedman. "We came up with a bunch of ideas that we could hang a legitimate story on. People would die with their eyes open and you'd see tubs o' blood. Out of that came *BLOOD FEAST*. We shot it in four and a half days in Florida. I went into Kolberg and told him that I had an idea for something new, a real horror film where we cut off arms and legs. He loved it and thought it would be great for his drive-ins. He asked how much it would cost and I told him 'about \$25,000.' He picked up the phone and

Marilyn Jordan as *HEAD MISTRESS*. "We always had lots of spanking & whipping. You could only do that in softcore—they'd never dared do that in hardcore."



said, 'Lucille, give Dave a check for \$25,000.' So I walked out of the office with a check for \$25,000.

"Meanwhile we had been contracted by LeRoy Griffith and Eli Jackson. Eli was the husband of Virginia 'Ding Dong' Bell, an old friend of mine who was a burlesque star. They wanted to make a picture with Virginia, who had a 48" bust and walked out on a stage and fell on her face. So we went down to Florida and, in 72 hours, we made a picture called BELL, BARE AND BEAUTIFUL (1968). The title was based on a very successful play called Bell, Book and Candle. While we were there, we cast BLOOD FEAST using a lot of the people who were in BELL, BARE AND BEAUTIFUL. We went to bed and slept for 24 hours, and then we started shooting BLOOD FEAST. The rest, of course, is history."

During a visit to the Chicago Playboy Club, Friedman met Connie Mason, who was working as a Bunny. He asked the blonde if she'd like to be in a movie. Familiar with Friedman and his films, Mason initially declined ("Everybody knows what kind of pictures you make, Mr. Friedman. I don't want to be in a nudie"). Friedman quickly countered with, "Believe me this isn't a nudie, it's a horror picture." Upon negotiating a salary, Mason approved her billing in BLOOD FEAST. "She was a beautiful girl," Friedman smiled. "I love Connie, but she couldn't act. Connie still looks good. She's 60 years old and looks like a million dollars. Herschell didn't particularly like her because she never knew her lines, and she was kind of walking through it. She was kind of above the whole thing."

Before the film was released, Mason was photographed as Playboy's June, '63 centerfold. "I certainly capitalized on that," laughed Friedman. "Although Herschell and I never saw all the money, that



Friedman wrote and co-produced STARLET (1969) for his Entertainment Ventures; the pretty wash plays HERSHELL in a cameo as a "nude" producer. Story: aging sex star is replaced by young ingenue. R: Chris Matlin on a eve of breakup with her lover.

little \$25,000 picture—as near as I can figure out—brought back about \$6 million before it was all over. I'm not talking about gross, I'm talking about film rental.

"Herschell and I had gotten into a stupid fight, which was my fault. Don't get me wrong, today we're the best of friends. He's a multimillionaire down in

Florida, and I'm a poor pauper here in Alabama. Anyway, you couldn't get out of your own way with BLOOD FEAST. Gary Sinise's father, Bob Sinise, was the cutter on this picture. He was an independent film cutter in Chicago, and I brought all this footage in there and Bob said, 'Who the hell is going to play this?' I told him not to worry



about it and just cut the picture. He did and Herschell scored the thing. I think the whole scoring thing was three pieces."

Finding the right venue to premiere the gore fest proved a bit tricky. Kolberg suggested opening it in one of his Chicago theatres, an idea Friedman quickly vetoed: "If it dropped dead, I didn't want it to drop dead in Chicago. Everyone in the business would have known about it. Kolberg suggested Gary, Indiana, but I thought that was too close. We finally settled on a theatre in Peoria."

"I made a hell of a campaign for BLOOD FEAST. I couldn't stand waiting to hear about it, so I persuaded Herschell and two girls to drive down to Peoria. We got off the freeway and, suddenly, we're on a black-top road and we're behind what we thought was a funeral pro-

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"[I] gave Portia's speech, from *Merchant of Venice*, to a nude actress for a screen test. She was great. Afterwards, she said, 'Gee, Mr. Friedman, you write the most beautiful dialogue.'"

him that we were the producer and director of the picture. He said, 'I ought to run you in for causing all this. I've got four men out here in this traffic jam.' Anyway, I gave him a cigar and he let us in, and this drive-in was full. When that picture came on that screen, history was made that night. It was the first of the gore films. From then on, you just opened the doors and got out of the way. After that, Kolberg said, 'What do you guys want to do next?'"

While on a trip to New York, Friedman purchased a front row seat for *Brigadoon*, a musical spun around a spectral Scottish town that materializes once every hundred years. Returning home, he discussed the stage play's scenario with Lewis, who—as a former Professor of English at the University of Mississippi—was fascinated with America's southern regions. "I think one of the reasons he liked me was because I'm an Alabama redneck," said Friedman. "He said, 'What about a little town in the south that had been massacred by the *Klansmen* in 1864, and comes to life a hundred years later, 1964?' Not bad. We wrote the story and called it *TWO THOUSAND MANIACS*."

"I took off for Florida and I found this little town, St. Cloud Florida which is now Disney World. It's right outside of Orlando. The town had 2,000 people and this one old hotel so we moved in. I insisted we use Connie Mason again and I fought Herschell tooth and nail on this, but she came down. The rest of the show we cast from the Orlando Little Theatre people. This picture turned out pretty good. Herschell had composed a song, 'Hang on to Your Confederate Money Because the South Will Rise Again.' We brought down this Chicago hillbilly band to record it. The film, shot in color and had a running time of 80 minutes, cost about \$40,000. Inventing creative ways to



Sybil Danning, billed as Sybilbe Genninger, debuted in *THE LONG, SWIFT SWORD OF Slaughter* (1971). "The German cut ran 2 days; I cut out the crap."

cession. There must have been a hundred cars in front of us. Maybe an accident. We inched along and, finally, I see on the horizon of the Illinois plains this drive-in theatre. All of these cars are going into this drive-in. There was a state trooper out in front, he was signalling the cars to go away: the theatre was filled to capacity. I stopped and told

kill people, I thought of all the old caray gimmicks of the dark horror fun house rides. At carnivals, we had a scurrying board where you throw a ball and hit the target and a clown falls in a tub of water; but in the film, we had a big huge rock on top of this tower. We tied up one of the victims and put her under that. The townspeople are all throwing stones at the rock: finally impacted, it collapses on the woman, crushing the life out of her. Another one we had was the barrel of death. We drove these 10" spikes into the barrel, slid another victim inside and then rolled the barrel down the hill."

The production of the low-budget film was smooth, with the exception of one problem. "Everybody on the set was laughing," said Friedman. "A lot of times, I would have to go out on the set and pinch the girls and make them cry, for crying out loud, to stop them from the goddamn laughing. I'd yell, 'No, no! You're supposed to be terrified. This is supposed to be hurting you.' But they'd be giggling like mad. They were having a ball."

The third chapter of Friedman's splatter trilogy was titled **COLOR ME BLOOD RED** (1968), the story of a whacked-out artist who paints his canvases with human blood. During production, Friedman noticed that the quality of competing products was a little better than his own: "I told Herschell that we had to get a little better but he said, 'No. One take is enough.' Anyway, we got into this stupid argument while we were making **COLOR ME BLOOD RED**. We dissolved our partnership and I moved out to the coast, where I finished the film. Herschell got involved with some other people and continued his own business. Because I wasn't there to sell it, **COLOR ME BLOOD RED** was never very successful."

From his Cordon Street offices in L.A., Friedman



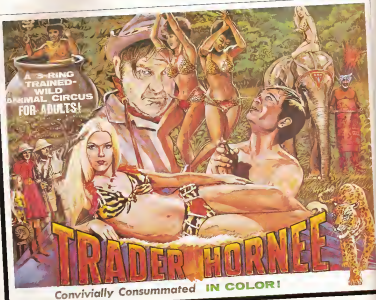
"With a title like [that], you know there's sex & group sex on a boat," notes writer James L. Linbacher. Friedman's next of starlets (below) appears in "simulated sex, incest, et al." Alternate title, **THERE SHE GOES**, presumably for sale in conservative regions.

launched Entertainment Ventures, a film company that specialized in softcore entertainment which had become a staple of the independent industry. He cast Stacey Walker in two films released in 1966, **A SMELL OF HONEY**, **A SWALLOW OF BRINE** and **THE NOTORIOUS DAUGHTER OF FANNY HILL**. Walker also appeared in a Friedman

short, **BUT CHARLIE, I NEVER PLAYED VOLLEYBALL**, all about a starlet who's persuaded by her manager to judge a Miss Nudist contest officiated at the Oakdale Ranch.

Flashing back to his acquaintance with Walker, Friedman smiles as he exhales cigar smoke: "Pete Perry and I were getting ready to make this **FANNY**





Friedman's campaign for **TRADER HORNEE** (1932), a tempest of jungle flicks. Deborah O'Bea, aka Gaea Silk, debuted as white goddess Aigona; she had worked as a cashier at a "rude" movie theater.



HILL film and we went out to Santa Monica to have lunch. It was a beautiful day so, after lunch, we were walking on the beach and this young girl came up to us. Her name was Stacey Walker. She was dirty and in rags, but just beautiful. She said she was hungry, and asked if we would buy

her a hot dog. We bought her the hot dog and asked her where she was from. She told us that she was from Texas and had been sleeping on the beach. She was 20 or 21 years old, and in her last year at Sam Houston University, when she ran away. I thought that if we could clean this kid up, she'd be gorgeous. I asked her if she would like to be in a movie. But Pete said, 'Listen to her. She sounds like Daniel Boone.' I said, 'I don't care what she sounds like. They're not going to be listening to her, they're going to be looking at her.' I told her there was some nudity involved and she said, 'Oh that's all right. I don't mind.' So we shot some tests of her and Pete said, 'You're right

she does sound like sour gum and molasses, but, God almighty, she is gorgeous.'

Though tailored for grindhouses, **THE NOTORIOUS DAUGHTER OF FANNY HILL** was elaborately produced. Adding to the lush look of the film was the apprenticeship of cinematographer Leslie Kovacs, whose career was in its em-

bryonic stage. Kovacs would later photograph films funded in the eight-figure bracket, e.g. **GHOSTBUSTERS**, **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE 3RD KIND**, etc. Fascinated by Walker, who played the title role, Friedman rushed the ingenious into his next production to circumvent her casting in competitive films. "I wrote a pic-

Claire Bronson is transformed from choriste (4) to **SHIR PERAK** (5). Friedman's homage to **PERAK**: "A whole lot of extras, the poor girl died of cancer at 49."



ture called **THE SMELL OF HONEY, THE SWALLOW OF BRINE**. I wrote it in a week and I asked Lasko what his schedule was like. We had just finished shooting **FANNY HILL** and I finished the trailer and designed the posters, and I started shooting **SMELL OF HONEY**. This was another good little roughie. I wrote the tag line 'There's a name for girls like her. You see it scrawled on men's room walls.'"

Friedman was ready to tackle his pet project: the producer's beloved carnival environment would serve as a backdrop for his homage to a horror classic. "When I was nine years old, I saw a film that affected me more than any picture I've ever seen in my life," said Friedman. "That was in 1952, and the film was called **FREAKS**. I was always going to remake that. But there weren't any more freaks by 1966. I had a lot of friends in the carnival business, so I had all these carnivals at my disposal and we started shooting **SHE FREAK** (1966).

"**FREAKS**, the original film, was about a European circus and was all dark. Now I'm shooting on bright California fair lots, where the sun is shining. The action had to be 'Behind the tents and in the of a monster midway, where something evil lurks.' It turned out pretty well. The star of **SHE FREAK** was Claire Brennan, who was a graduate of the Pasadena Playhouse. She owned a chain of women's stores called **Sassy Pants** and, after doing our movie, she got onto some TV series. And then the poor girl died of cancer at the age of 40. A waste of an actress."

Veteran makeup artist Harry Thomas, who created the film's title character, worked on Friedman's subsequent films, including **THE EROTIC ADVENTURES OF ZORRO**, **THE LUSTFUL TURK**, and **HEAD MISTRESS**. To this day, Friedman roars with laughter while recounting

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"Sybil Danning was a 19-year-old Munich model when she made her film debut for us. She became Queen of the Bimbos in Prison. She had some little creep for a manager."



F. Actress/mode Peggy Church as **THE ALL-AMERICAN GIRL** (75). Mark Hoggen's erotic classic. Church was also cast with Uschi Digard in Friedman's **THE BIG SNATCH** (THE BIG CATCH in more provincial areas). At Jerome Eden and organ donor in **BLOOD FEAST** (The film, produced for \$29,000, "bought back \$6 million."



one of **SHE FREAK**'s reviews "Kevin Thomas, a reviewer for *The L.A. Times*, said of **BLOOD FEAST** when it opened in Los Angeles, '**BLOOD FEAST** is a blot on the motion picture business. It is amateurish in every department, and only readers of puerile comic books will go see this movie.' Two years later, he reviews **SHE FREAK** and says, '**SHE FREAK** is a surprisingly good little picture, which was made by veteran showman Dave Friedman. Lyrical in its composition, it



really got the feel of the carnival.' The best review I ever had were both by Kevin Thomas."

Casually leaping from genre to genre, Friedman finally landed in the realm of science fiction with **SPACE THING** (1968). His personal review of the film? "**SPACE THING** is the only picture ever made that makes **PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE** look like **CITIZEN KANE**," deadpans Friedman. Though he wrote most of his films, the pro-

ducer admits "a lack of patience" pressured him to resist a director's credit, however, though Byron Mabe was originally hired as *SPACE THING*'s director, Friedman finally helmed the movie: "Of course, the effects were just ridiculous," Friedman said. "I had this toy flying saucer suspended from a string, and people are sitting on garbage cans turned upside down. We shot it out in the desert."

"I was probably the most hands-on producer there ever was. I was on the set every day and, if I didn't like something, I'd tell the director to re-shoot it. About the fourth day of shooting, Byron—who was by now above our business—came to me and said, 'This isn't for me.' So I told him that I'd finish it. The picture is just

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"I asked if she'd ever consider coming to Hollywood. She said, 'Russ Meyer was here a few weeks ago; he didn't think I had enough breasts.' I said, 'Russ has his thing and I have mine.'"



T. BRAND OF SHAME: Friedman & Marsha Jordan rehearsed for a western: "about a lesbian dance hall owner scheming to steal a girl's nice nap." At Shelby Livingston leaves her thurst to a redneck in 2000 *BARBACUS*, produced for \$45,000, it was shot at St. Cloud, Florida (now called Disney World).



jail. I had to go and beat her out for a marijuana bust or something. I drove her back to Palmdale to get her on the set. She finished the picture and that was the last I saw her.

"In the opening of *SPACE THING*, Steve Vincent is in bed with his wife and he's a science fiction nut case, who stays up all night reading science fiction. He tells her that he was sent to earth to study humans. Carla Peterson was the captain of the spaceship, the lesbian commander if the girls didn't do what she wants them to, she whips them. We always had a lot of spanking and whipping. You could only do that in softcore, they never dared do that in hardcore. Anyway, she falls in love with this alien who looks like an earthman and he 'straightens' her out. All the other boys and girls pair off and they complete their mission, and return to earth safely."

Taking a page from his own career, Friedman wrote *STARLET* (1969), the story of an exploitation filmmaker that was shot at the old Monogram Studios. He cast Kathy Core, who was billed as Katha Cole, in the role of Maxine Hemmings: "A graduate of the Latin School, she was the daughter of one of the owners of the biggest advertising house in Chicago. She's now a director in New York, a member of the Director's Guild. She was going with Johnny Alterman at the time, and Johnny brought her in. Kathy was perfect for the part. I wanted an older-looking girl who was going to play a fading star in a movie produced at Entertainment Ventures, which was my company. Stuart Lancaster played the head of the studio."

Friedman, playing himself in the film, screen tests starlet Carol Yates (Deirdre Nelson): "In all of my scripts, there is always a little Shakespeare thrown in. 'I'm a great Shakespeare fan. When I was in high school, I performed Shakespeare and I can spout Shakespeare. The



terrible. But it just took off and did terrific business. It had some beautiful girls in it. It was hugely successful on video. Something Weird Video handles all my pictures, and mine are their biggest sellers.

"Mersey Montella, a pretty girl who had been working in nudies, was in it and she married Mickey Rooney, Jr. One day, she's late and she calls and I asked her where she was. She said, 'I'm in the Van Nuys police station

...was that I was giving a girl a screen test and, in a bit of whimsey, I gave her a speech from *Mercy of Venice*. There were about three pages of dialogue.

"For a nude actress, Dee Blackwood (a.k.a. Deidra Nelson) was pretty fair. We're shooting the test and she goes into this speech, and she goes through the whole thing without a break. Dean Kantor, who was directing this thing, looked at me and I looked at him. The sound man couldn't believe this, either. Dean said, 'That was great. Let's go in for a couple of cutaways. Can you take it from such and such?' She said, 'Oh, yes' and did it perfectly. Dean got his insert shots and cutaways. After she was through, she came up to me and said, 'Gee, Mr. Friedman, you write the most beautiful dialogue.' I didn't have the heart to tell her that my friend, Bill Shakespeare, had written it."

Friedman, in fact, hammed in a profusion of cameo roles: he was a snake-wielding soldier in *THE EROTIC ADVENTURES OF ZORRO*, the drunk at the saloon in *TRADER HORN* and a stagecoach driver in *BRAND OF SHAME*. "I was the Hitchcock of the nudges," laughed Friedman.

He also portrayed a Nazi general in *LOVE CAMP #7* (66), a roughie which Friedman didn't produce though he secured some distribution rights and created the ad campaign. "That picture inspired a picture that I did produce," said Friedman through another burst of cigar smoke. "*LOVE CAMP #7* was a big success up in Canada. A Canadian firm wanted to make something similar but on a much grander scale." The resultant film was *ILSA, SHE WOLF OF THE SS*; it was the ultimate roughie, turning Nazi atrocities into Grand Guignol gaudery. It was about as sensitive to the real-life Holocaust as a dirty joke about Mother Theresa. "I produced it, but



TRADER HORN: Buddy Postart meets a jungle nymph (Dee Blackwood). Friedman discovered the model during her stint as an Atlanta hotel hostess. "I told her we'd put her up for 7-10 days & pay her \$7,000 to play the role. So she came out."





Faye Bredt, actresses also, penuses a script. Credits include PLEASE DON'T KISS MY MOTHER (spoof of LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS), THE JECYLL AND HYDE PORTFOLIO, SHOW BUNNIES, COUNTRY HOCKEY, Ed Wood's NERDROMANIA and Friedman's ADULT VERSION OF JECYLL & HYDE.

I didn't let them use my name because they were such assholes," continued Friedman. "They were playing a money game. They hired me to produce this picture, and I shot it at the Selznick Studio. I used the old HOGAN'S HEROES sets. I asked them if I could burn it down and they said, 'Sure!' they were going to

destroy it anyway.

"Those Canadians couldn't get a phone installed. I was using my business license, my tax numbers and I'm hiring all these people, and the money is coming from Panama to Nova Scotia through Luxembourg. One of these things. And there was never enough money. One day I called

them and said, 'I need \$50,000 today or I'm going to shut this down,' and the guy said, 'Maybe you'll lend us \$50,000 for a couple of days.' I said, 'Listen, I'm not your partner I'm working for you.'

"At any rate, Dyanne Thorne, who played Ilsa, was an old dear friend of mine from burlesque days.

She'd been working in Vegas in burlesque, where she was what we call a 'talking woman.' She doesn't strip. She just comes out and is kind of a foil between a straight man and the comic. She was also a model and a Pussycat girl with the Pussycat Chain. I'd known her for years and I told her about this movie, and told

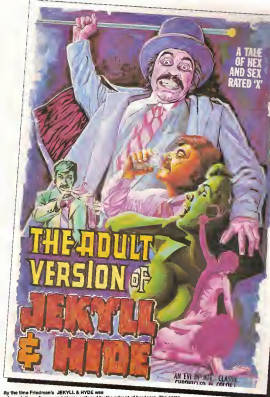
Dyanne Thorne, a Vegas burlesque luminary, as ILSA, SHE WOLF OF THE SS (74). "I didn't let them use my name," says Friedman, "because they were such assholes." Unfortunately, the film spawned a sequel (ILSA, HARD KEEPER OF THE OIL SHEDS) as well as imitations (TIGRESS, GNETA, THE MAD BUTCHER, etc.).



her that it was pretty rough. There's a scene where she had to urinate on the general and everything else. But she thought it sounded like a legitimate film and decided to do it. Joe Blasco, who was doing the makeup effects, was a young makeup man at the time and is now the head of makeup at ABC. We came up with some horrendous effects for that thing. It took about ten days to shoot. That's a long shoot for me. ZORRO I shot in seven days.

"There's one scene where Utschi Dignard [pages 16 & 19] is in a procure chamber. We did it with a lot of steam and dry ice. There wasn't room for another shot that I liked, but didn't use, where they're cooking this girl in boiling water and she's in there screaming and all of her skin is coming off. But we did the shot where they're surgically experimenting with a human guinea pig; her arm is split open and you see all these maggots...actually, they weren't maggots but meaty worms. ILSA got an X-rating. The distributor asked what he had to do to get an 'R.' He was told the only scenes that would qualify for a softer rating were the opening and closing titles."

Friedman distributed THE RIBALD TALES OF ROBIN HOOD (1969), but didn't produce. The film's overseas sale prompted German producers to negotiate with Friedman for another "costume picture" (performed, of course, sans costumes). One catch: the hero had to be some sort of German icon. "I said, 'Sure, anybody but Hitler,'" recalled Friedman. "They asked me if I heard of Siegfried. I said, 'Of course! I'm an opera buff. I go to the opera and I know the whole Ring Cycle.' So I wrote this thing about Siegfried and we were going to shoot it in Germany. The Germans—at the time, anyway—didn't shoot sync sound. They dubbed the whole thing. Of course, the German version ran two days. I cut out a lot of the



By the time Friedman's JEKYLL & HYDE was released, the softcore market was eclipsed by the advent of hardcore. The same year (72), DEEP THROAT surfaced as the cover for an "adult revolution." (3) Jekyll embraces First Bard.

crap and put a little humor into the thing. Most of it was shot in Munich at the Bavaria Studios.

"The film was released in America as THE LONG, SWIFT SWORD OF SIEGFRIED. Sybil Danning, making her film debut, was 19 years old at the time. She had been a model in Munich. Sybil's father was an American army officer and

her mother was a German. She spoke perfect English and perfect German, too. Her real name was Sybille Danning. I went out with Sybil several times when we were in Munich, and then I didn't see her for years. She had some little creep as her manager. And, of course, she came over here and became the Queen of the Bimbos in prison things. I called her



Heidi Ho A lot of the film was shot in Innsbruck, Austria in this castle. Over there, you can rent these castles for a couple of hundred dollars a day. The Germans made a lot of costume pictures there."

Uchi Digard, Rene Bond, Jennifer Brooks and Betsy Whitting were cast in Friedman's productions: while none of these softcore superstars transcended the adult market (though Bond appeared in B-movies, including the aptly titled **INVASION OF THE BEE GIRLS**), they do have their own contingent of followers. "When you were in the business in the late '60s, there were scores of girls—who did this for a living—who worked 30-40 weeks a year," Friedman said. "All of them were pretty nice kids. It isn't like these kids in the hardcore business. Today,

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"With hardcore, it became a video biz. Exploitation & drive-in theatres vanished: there was no place for our pictures. There was no longer the thrill of seeing your film on a big screen."



T&E: Sherry Water as the notorious daughter of Fanny Hill (1968). "If Stacey had stayed around, she would have been one of the biggest stars. She was 22 or 23, and just beautiful." L: Friedman, circa 1967, still healthy.



these companies sign these girls to exclusive contracts, and there's an agent who handles them. These girls today will sign a contract with these video companies, to make so many videos a year, and not make them for anybody else. But, heck then, a girl would work for me one week, for Bob Crass the next week and work for Harry Novak the following

week. We all knew them. They all knew one another. Crass and I had the right idea, I think, and the hardcore people have done just the opposite. We decided to never create a star that way: \$100 a day was standard, and that was a lot of money back in the '60s. Let's not get into a star system. In hardcore films, they've done that with the Margaret Dures, the Sakas, etcetera. It got to the point where someone like Soka was getting \$15,000 for three days in a hardcore film.

"A couple of the softcore celebrities became stars just by their own popularity. Marsha Jordan was one. She comes from a town 90 miles north of where I live now, Gaston, Alabama. I knew her father. Marsha had that maternally look. She had a very pretty face and a great chest, but was a little bit wider in the hips and had than most of the girls around in these things. The girls were very pretty in the softcore pictures. A lot of them were girls who came out to Hollywood to make it in the majors and never did, so they wound up doing these things. There was no real sex involved. There was nudity and simulated sex but, as long as they knew up front there was no real sex, there was no stigma to appearing in these things.

"A girl named Rene Bond became a star. She went into hardcore. Rene was a very beautiful brunette girl with very expressive eyes. She was a good actress, hell of a body on her. If Stacey Walker had stayed around, she would have been one of the biggest stars of all of them."

Friedman's canon includes the inevitable jungle lampoon, **TRADER HORNEE** (1970). The name derives from MGM's 1932 classic, **TRADER HORN**, which starred an ill-fated Edwina Booth as the White Goddess. The producer had just wrapped **STARLET** and was fishing for a concept. "I'd always been fascinated by the old 'white goddesses' pic-



turns," he grinned, "I always loved the Tarzan movies, so I just took every jungle picture cliché in the world and made it into TRADER HORNEE. The title wrote itself. I just took that title and changed 'horn' to 'hornee'."

Friedman's story: a bank, which handles the estate of an explorer, dispatches private detective Hamilton Hornee to the African jungles. His mission: to determine if the great white hunter's young daughter has survived a 15-year tenure in the tropics. Hornee is accompanied by the girl's cousin, who stand to inherit the vast fortune if the girl is dead.

The producer cast a newcomer as Alguna, the white goddess. While in Atlanta, meeting with a sub-distributor at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Friedman was introduced to a youthful, blonde beauty named Deborah Stills (Deek Sills) who was working as a hostess. "We were talking, and I asked her if she ever considered coming to Hollywood. She asked me if I knew Russ Meyer. She said, 'Russ was here a couple of weeks ago and talked to me, but he didn't think I had enough breasts.' I said, 'Well, Russ has his thing, I have mine.' Actually, I look at a face first. As a matter of fact, she didn't have very good breasts; otherwise, she was gorgeous. She had worked as a cashier in a nudie theatre there in Atlanta, so she knew all the pictures pretty well. I told her that I'd like her to come to Hollywood and do this jungle picture, and that I'd put her up for a week or ten days and pay her \$1,000. So she came out."

Jonathan Lucas, who was Friedman's neighbor and director of NBC's popular DEAN MARTIN SHOW, helmed TRADER HORNEE but was credited with his Indian name de plume, Tsamadi. "He brought his own choreographer in," explained Friedman, "and taught Deborah to do that routine where she is dancing with all of the natives at the end of the picture. Gardner McKay, an actor and later a music critic, came out to the set one day to deliver the leopard we were using. He saw Deborah and he took her away, and she lived with him for a while. Then she finally married some guy who was in the record business. I took Deborah to the opening of TRADER



T. Friedman picked-up Peter Walker's British import partially shot in 3-D, the '72 release starred Burt Reynolds' Lynn Peters (TWINS OF EVIL). R. Friedman's cameo in LOVE CAMP 7 ('68), the precursor to I.S.A. SHE WOLF OF THE DO.

HORNEE in Columbus, Georgia and Cleveland. She didn't really have an interest in pictures, and this is the only one she ever did. I came up with the 'Deek' pseudonym."

The jungle adventure was hyped with a nine-minute trailer—that's a couple minutes longer than the average cartoon short. "Back then, you had long



Jez-e-bel,
Jez'a-bel
 9th Cent. B.C.
 Phoenician Princess
 and wife of Ahab.
 King of Israel.
 known

for her wicked
 conduct (1 Kings
 16:31 ff.) an impu-
 dent, shameless or
 abandoned woman

THE JOYS of

Jezebel

INTENSEST AND MOST
 IN COLOR

Friedman's biblical drama (1970) about the seductress Jezebel, played by Christine Hurlay, who also appeared in TRADER HORNE. B. SPACE THING. "I had this toy flying saucer suspended from a string, and actors are sitting on trash cans turned upside down."

trailers for one reason," Friedman elucidated, "you really could not say too much in the newspapers because of censorship and, of course, you couldn't do anything on radio or television. So the trailer was the only way you had to sell the show. Hey, I always said my pictures weren't all that great, but my trailers are superb."

Recently, Friedman bought the rights to three burlesque films which featured pin-up idol Bettie Page: STRIPORAMA, VARI-ETEASE and TEASERA-MA. "The pictures were made by Irving Klaw in 1953," said Friedman. "In 1958, he sold all rights—except 16mm and still rights—to Dan Sonny Dan distributed them on the west coast

for half a dozen years, until burlesque pictures became a thing of the past. I knew that they were in the vault and Something Weird honcho Mike Vraney said, 'Hey, Dan's got those old burlesque pictures and there's a whole thing now about Bettie Page.' So I made a deal with Dan to acquire the rights. And I, in turn, licensed them to Mike."

The producer took a shot at a more mainstream film with **JOHNNY FIRE-CLOUD**: the title character, an Indian, avenges racist assaults leveled at his family. Cast included Ralph Meeker (*KISS ME DEADLY*, page 36) as a bigoted sheriff and Christina Hart as his daughter, who's in love with the crusading Indian. "JOHNNY FIRE-CLOUD is a straight, R-rated picture," shrugged Friedman. "Bill Castleman directed it was made in Panavision. I wrote the tag line, 'Red Skins no longer bite the dust, they just eat the dirt.' **JOHNNY FIRE-CLOUD**: not a love story, a hate story." That was a big budget picture, it cost \$300,000. I shot it at the old Selznick lot and on location. We found Christina through an agent. The only thing I had seen her in was **THE STEWARDESSES 3-D**. Her father was the building manager of the Supreme Court Building in Washington. A very good little actress."

I pop another software siren, Robyn Whitting, into the conversation: she was featured in **THE DIRTY MIND OF YOUNG SALLY**, **VIDEO VIXENS** and Friedman's own **EROTIC ADVENTURES OF ZORRO**. The producer initially reacted to her name with a blank stare, but suddenly—"Oh, that's Jackie Jovan! Beautiful brunette, pretty smart girl. She had been a narcotics agent. She got out of the exploitation business, produced a movie of her own and married Steve Railsback. I ran into her in Cannes one year."

Queries regarding the





EXOTIC ADVENTURES OF ZORRO (1937): Douglas Fay (l) played the masked avenger in Friedman's "comedy of Errors."

casting process, specifically for exploitation films raises the hairs on Friedman's neck. Big time. "You just cast these pictures. The girls would come into your office. They would read some lines. If they were good and were interested, we'd ask if we could have a look at them. They'd go in the bathroom and they'd come out nude, and we'd say, 'Fine. Turn around. Fine. No scars, no marks, you'll do.' People have the idea that this was a big orgy. It wasn't. When you've seen as much skin as I have, it's as much a turn-on as looking at a steak at the Palm."

Not unlike Russ Meyer, Friedman was driven out of the industry by '70s shift to hardcore sex films. He briefly dabbled with triple-X lampoons, what with *BLONDE HEAT* and *SEVEN INTO SNOWY*. But he didn't stick around very long. "The business had become a hardcore business," Friedman fumed. "Hey,

don't get me wrong. I don't have anything against hardcore from a moral point of view. I think an adult should be able to see anything he wants to see.

"But, more than that, it had become a video business. There was no longer the thrill of seeing your picture up on a big screen in a theatre. The exploitation and drive-in theatres disappeared: there was no longer a place for our pictures. In as far as making these pictures for home video, and then on cable, it just didn't interest me. I know guys like Fred Olen Ray are doing very well. My big thrill was never so much in being on the set making a picture. I loved designing the press-book, designing the one-sheet, cutting the trailer once it was finished. But the biggest thrill was standing in front of a theatre somewhere, and watching people come in to see the picture.

"The center of the press-

book, which unfolded into a poster, just gave the exhibitor another piece of paper to put up in his lobby. Remember, I had started in this business as a poster clerk. I knew every size poster there was."

The first volume of Friedman's autobiography, *A Youth In Babylon: Confessions of a Trash Film King*, which

chronicled his career up until 1964, was published in 1990 and sold out. The producer has completed a second volume titled *Kings of Babylon*, but I just had an argument with the publisher. They want it shorter and I don't want it cut. It's my story." It's a story that can't be abridged to a 9-minute trailer. Maybe I'll wait for the movie. □

JOHNNY FREEDLOUS, Friedman's \$200,000 multimillion pic w/ Ralph Meeker & Catherine Keener. "The only thing I'd seen Christine in was STEWARD'S CASE 3-G."



'50s Starlet ANGIE DICKINSON

DEFROSTING THE '50S, SHE WAS EVEN MORE POPULAR AS A MIDDLE-AGED BOMBSHELL.

BY DAN SCAPPEROTTI



Dickinson (seated, and from right) as bikini girl "Kitty," a minor role that she performed in *WALK WITH THE GUN*, a 1955 western helmed for Robert Mitchum

Halloween, 1963. TV was eroding boxoffice business and the film industry was feeling the heat: the old studio system was on its last legs. But America didn't care: glued to television sets, the public was mesmerized by a beauty pageant on NBC's *COLGATE COMEDY HOUR*, the Sunday night variety show alternately hosted by the likes of Abbott & Costello and Martin & Lewis. Among the six finalists was Angie Dickinson, a starlet who had earlier entered the competition on her way home from work. Her eyes locked on the judges. One was gentle comedian Jimmy Durante; the other, leering from behind a cloud of cigar smoke, was Groucho Marx.

Halloween, 1997: Sitting in her kitchen, Dickinson drinks a cup of coffee. A little bird house sits on top of the refrigerator which rests against the Pippin apple green walls. A 12" statue of a

Gratuitous poses that would be insured for \$4 million. Dickinson supported Frank Sinatra. Sammy Davis Jr. & Dean Martin in *OCEAN'S 11*. "I wasn't a true member of the Rat Pack. I was on the fringe because it was a guy's club."



"My role in RIO BRAVO wasn't just the wife being left back to tend to the cows. It's a real back-at-you woman who doesn't take guff from John Wayne's sheriff."

pink, green and white kitten blends into her draperies. The coy room is wired with two telephones, one with a long cord. African violets peek from their baskets, while other plants are scattered adjacent to that former scourge of Hollywood, a TV set—14" screen.

"I love popcorn," said Dickinson, sitting her cup on the table and pointing to a good supply of the snack food nearby. She nostalgically recalls her catechism training: whenever the nuns queried Dickinson about her goals, she'd reply, "I want to be a movie star." That aspiration never again crossed her mind until college. She wanted a career, not domesticity.

One shortcut to a Hollywood career was a beauty contest.

And she was among the competition's winners, who were christened "The T-Vanuses" by a public relations at-large. The triumph rekindled her "movie star" stratagem. "I was bitten by the bug once I walked onto a stage," smiles Dickinson as she reflects on the '53 tournament. "The casting director called and asked if I wanted to be on the show. Of course, I told him I had no acting experience but he just laughed and asked, 'Can you walk?' Obviously, I wasn't being called to act anyway. I walked into that rehearsal hall and that was my first day in show business." The

Dickinson in *BLACK WHIP*, a 1948 B&W Western shot in Regalcolor. Director Charles Mergals Warren also helmed B-horror movies (*UNKNOWN TERROR*)



1948 MARLOWE - GRAY

JOHN MARLOWE

AND GAIL GRAY

JOHN MARLOWE

AND GAIL GRAY

JOHN MARLOWE

AND GAIL GRAY

JOHN MARLOWE

AND GAIL GRAY

guest star was Frank Sinatra, who just garnered an Oscar nomination for his performance in *FROM HERE TO ETERNITY*. "I was introduced to the best part of show business," recounts Dickinson. She'd be reacquainted with the crooner, next time as an equal, less than seven years later.

Another beauty contest landed Dickinson on the Warner Brothers studio lot. She debuted in a Doris Day musical, *LUCKY ME*. Her single line: "Happy Birthday, Uncle Otis." Subsequent assignments included a Randolph Scott eater, *SHOOT-OUT AT MEDICINE BEND*, and *CHINA GATE*, where Dickinson played the Eurasian wife of mercenary Gene Barry in a French-controlled Vietnam. "By then, the contract system had stopped," the actress explained. "They didn't teach

"The movies I did for Warner Brothers are good now, but mainly because everyone in them is either a legend or dead. They cast me in little stinkers."



▲ W) John Wayne in *RIO BRAVO*: "My big break. I did a lot of Westerns & they weren't like that." It's likely she's alluding to obscure films like *GUN THE MAN DOWN* (B). ▲ W) Bette Ebers in the 1930 cage version of *Northwest Passage*



you tap dancing and fencing anymore, nor would they send you off to premieres with Rock Hudson."

While maintaining her day job as secretary for a company that manufactured airplane seats, Dickinson continued to bounce between small roles. Finally, director Howard Hawks screen-tested the fledgling actress for an intimate but star-studded

horse opera, *RIO BRAVO*. John Wayne was cast as Sheriff John T. Chance, but Frank Gifford—last year's tabloid "bad boy"—stood in for Wayne (aka The Duke) during tryouts. "That film was my big break," recounts Dickinson. "Back then, Frank was retired because of an injury and he was under contract at Warner Bros. When they test new people, they don't use the real star. Somebody stands in for them and Frank stood in for Duke. Kathie Lee [Gifford] still doesn't trust me. We've talked about it and it's always a laugh. I never fess up to anything, I just say, 'He was awfully cute, Kathie.'"

"I was blown away. Within four years of starting my career, I was cast opposite John Wayne, Dean Martin and Ricky Nelson in that kind of big movie. It was just wonderful."

Not unlike Marlene Dietrich's "Frenchy" (1939's *DESTINY RIDES AGAIN*), Dickinson's role of frontier card player "Feathers" was among the genre's rare opportunities to deflect stereotype. "It's not just the wife being left back tending to the cows," laughs Dickinson. "It's a real back-at-you woman who doesn't take guff from the big sheriff. I did a lot of westerns, and they weren't like that."

Flanked by a machismo cast, Dickinson held her own. "I fit in with the boys by being a woman," she slyly laughs. "In those days, I didn't have any women friends on the set because, basically, few in the crew were females. The wardrobe woman, the hairdresser and the script girl were the only women on the set besides the actors. Most westerns only had the men and the leading lady. It was kind of lonesome, but I always got along with men so it wasn't a problem."

John Wayne, who passed time in Tucson's blistering heat by playing chess with co-star Dean Martin, impressed Dickinson because "he was himself. You knew that the Duke was very out-



spoken. There were no airs about him. No falseness. What you saw was what you got. When he was having a tough time making a scene work, it was as tough for him as it was for me. He wasn't able to hide his insecurities, either. We both struggled through those scenes, and they were very difficult scenes. He was very kind to someone who was as green as I was. At one point, he could have said, 'God-damn! Why can't you get it together and learn how to act!' He never was unkind like that. He was very patient with me. I was pretty nervous. And there were heavyweights all around me.

"Rocky (Nelson) said I was talking one day while they were taking some stills, and I asked, 'How do you perform in front of all those people?' He was big in the concert scene at that time. He said, 'Oh, I love it, but this makes me nervous.' He was very nervous while acting. Being that it was an important film, he wanted it to be good."

She recalls that director Hawks "was very patient with me. He was a slow shooter. He just took his time and he waited for you to get it right or to get it good." Hawks, in fact, had signed Dickinson to a personal contract. When the film wrapped, and Hawks requested a six-month extension

of her contract, Dickinson speculated he'd be her professional anchor. She was in for a rude awakening.

Upon her return from Tucson, the actress was beckoned by Warner Bros. to test for *THE BRAMBLE BUSH* (1960). "Now, I thought that was nice because it was a movie with Richard Burton, that 'sensation from England,'" Dickinson grins. "I drove up to the gate and told them what I was there for, and the guard said, 'Oh, we have your permanent pass here.' A confused Dickinson

beefed that her tenure would be quite transitory, she was obligated to only test for a role. C'mon, what's so permanent about that? But her protests fall on deaf ears: the guard pressed the pass into Dickinson's palm. And then it dawned upon her. "That's how I found out that I had been sold to Warner Bros. by Hawks—from the guard at the gate. It was awful," she groans. "I was so disappointed because I had signed with Howard Hawks, not with Warner Bros., and I thought I would get another

movie with Howard Hawks and he would direct my career. I was so stupid."

The studio quickly assigned the young actress to the usual round of potboilers and television shows, none of which advanced her career. "The movies are good now mainly because everyone in them is either a legend...or dead," says Dickinson between sips of her second cup of coffee. "For instance, *THE SINS OF RACHEL CADE* [61] was a movie they put me in, but it was with Roger Moore and Peter Finch. Roger Johnson has a role too. It was nothing when we made it, but 30 years later—because Peter Finch went on to be so great and Roger Moore and I got some fame—it now kind of holds up."

Other actresses were heirs to Dickinson's preferred roles: "I did *ROME ADVENTURE* [62], which is kind of a cult classic with Suzanne Pleshette, Troy Donahue and Rossano Brazzi. I was the villain, the mature woman who gave Suzanne all the trouble. I was the bitch. I hated doing



Dickinson with Richard Egan in *TENSION AT TABLE ROCK* (64), still another horse opera. "By then, the contract system stopped. They didn't teach you tap dancing and fencing anymore, or send you off to privates with Rock Hudson."

Dickinson (smiling, top left) as one of six finalists in the 1953 TV-Venus beauty pageant. L: The winners (Dickinson, left) posing for the October, '53 TV Guide.



that movie because I had hoped I would get **THE CHAPMAN REPORT**, a big movie being made on the lot. But they didn't put me in that, they put me in little stinkers. I did another one called **A FEVER IN THE BLOOD** with Efrem Zimbalist. I was the wife of a senator who was played by Dan Amico. I came up to him at one of those AFI dinners years later and said to him, 'Hello Mr Amico. I was your wife once.' And he just loved that."

Dickinson's celebrity was more often a result of her public fraternizing, which overshadowed the half-baked Warner Bros. turkeys. But she was optimistic about **OCEAN'S ELEVEN** which, on paper, appeared to

"THE KILLERS has the only scene where Ronald Reagan ever slapped a woman. When he said he was going into politics, I was too stupid to think he meant it."



GENE BARRY-ANGIE DICKINSON-NO 'KING' CELL



BARRY-ANGIE DICKINSON-NO 'KING' CELL



GENE BARRY-ANGIE DICKINSON-NO 'KING' CELL

in the project that was a literal "buddy" movie. The gang was supported by a myriad of sterling character actors, including Henry Silva, Richard Conte and Akin Tamiroff. Dickinson played Beatrice Ocean, Sinatra's estranged spouse.

Dickinson later learned that Davis Jr. pitched her casting to Sinatra ("Ros knows who would be a gas for your wife's Angel"). Ole Blue Eyes seized upon the idea, but Dickinson was bitterly disappointed that one of her three small scenes had been cut in pre-production: "I remember Frank saying, 'Look, if it doesn't belong in there, it's not going to look good anyway...so it's best that we don't even bother to shoot it. It just doesn't fit.' So he consoled me and he was right. I had only a brief role in that movie but I'm happy to be in it."

Lewis Milestone, then 65 years old, seemed an unlikely choice for the director of a tongue-in-cheek confection: after all, his track record was laden with critically lauded dramaturgy, with stuff like **RAIN**, **ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT**, **LES MISÉRABLES** and **OF MICE AND MEN**. "Lewis was a wonderful man," Dickinson remembers. "He tolerated all of those bad boys on that show, and we became very close. He's a great name in those history books about directors. Everyone was having a great time making that movie. After all, it was a comedy and you can buy all that schtick that you can't do on a drama. All of those bad boys, who were best of friends, were basically playing in the sand. So it was great fun watching them have fun and being a part of it. They also put on a show at the Sands Hotel every night after shooting. It was a nonstop fiesta."

The actresses wistfully admit, "I wasn't a true member of the Rat Pack. I was always on the fringes because it was a boy's club. But they liked women, so women were around, including me. I had already dated



CHINA GATE (right). Co-starring w/ Gene Barry (left), Dickinson gave legs to the 1957 release (above), helmed by cult director Sam Fuller.

be a sure-fire hit. A lightweight heist movie, all about the systematic looting of five Vegas casinos, the 1960 release was a vehicle for the Rat Pack. Peter Lawford, upon discovering the central story, developed a production company with Frank Sinatra, they cast themselves—along with compatriots Dean Martin, Sammy Davis, Jr. and Joey Bishop—

Frank, so Frank knew me by the time of OCEAN'S ELEVEN. I had already done RIO BRAVO with Dean, so I was one of the pals. It was wonderful."

By the early 1960s, a truce softened the high-tooth war waged between TV and movies. Studio executives embraced the new medium as a viable market for their product. Universal's Lew Wasserman decided that feature films could be made and sold directly to the networks, bypassing theatrical distribution. NBC, quick to jump on the bandwagon, produced three features aimed at the small screen. But one movie in the trilogy, THE KILLERS, was rejected by the NBC's standards and practices committee. It seems the network's brass gauged the 1964 release—a remake of a 1946 movie, based upon an Ernest Hemingway story—as too violent and risqué for prime time.

John Cassavetes plays a teacher who double crosses a criminal kingpin (Ronald Reagan). Dickinson, cast as a femme fatale who's the catalyst for Cassavetes' decline, describes director Don Siegel as "a very quiet. He was a mischievous, adorable person. He always had a little smile on his face, as if he were just about to tell you a joke. He was very playful. He was ping pong champion of the world or the United States. I never knew that until his memorial service, where they showed him playing ping pong. He had a pixie quality about him. Cassavetes was one of his best friends, so they had a wonderful time just being together."

"THE KILLERS was shot as a movie for television," but it was theatrically distributed. So, once again, I was in a groundbreaker which I love. Cassavetes and I were rolling around in the sheets and it's very violent. Lee Marvin held me out a window by my ankles and slapped me around. We were lying together on a couch, or something, and kissing which you couldn't



Dickinson on the RIO BRAVO set (her most memorable line: "Hey, sweetie, you forget your pants?"). "I was blown away," she says. "Within 4 years, at starting my career, to be cast with John Wayne and Dean Martin...Wonderful!"

do in those days. There was no nudity that I can recall."

But production was debilitated "because we were supposed to start shooting the day President Kennedy was killed. It was a tough time. We were behind a day and we had to shoot that movie under a heavy veil of sorrow for all of us. It wasn't a knee slapper."

Reagan resigned himself to do *THE KILLERS* only because he had owed the studio a film to finish out his contract. It was the final credit in his prolific film career. "He was stuck and he didn't like it," says Dickinson. "He was pleasant. He has always been a pleasant man. But we were on opposite ends of the political spectrum, so I just stayed out of his way. He was always studying his papers. I had no idea he was going to go on and become governor. He was studying and always reading the papers, and he was very political and outspoken. But I would always get out of the way. When he said he was going into politics, I was too stupid to think he really meant it."

Howard Hawks surreptitiously sold Dickinson's contract to Warner Bros., her debut film for the company was *THE BRAMBLE BUSH* (starring Richard Widmark, R). Final film with the Rat Pack, *OCEAN'S ELEVEN* (1960).



"The film also has the only scene where Reagan ever had to slap a woman. He says to me, 'Get on home' and I say, 'I'm not going home, I'm staying' and then he whacks me one and says, 'I said get on home.' It's all an act because I'm there pretending to be in love with Cassavetes, but we're setting him up. As a production, it looks kind of cheap which it was because it was shot for TV but if you forget that, it's quite a good film."

Our conversation flashes forward to 1971 when the sexual revolution was in full swing. Producer Gene Roddenberry imported Roger Vadim, the French softcore sovereign (BARBARELLA, BLOOD & ROSES, NIGHT GAMES), to direct PRETTY MAIDS ALL IN A ROW. Rock Hudson starred as a football coach whose pastimes include seducing the student body. After one comely coed threatens to go public with Hudson's amorous adventures, he bumps her off. Pretty soon, other equally curvaceous but cold bodies turn-up on campus. Dickinson played a voluptuous teacher named Miss Smith, who's the Jessica Rabbit of higher education. "Rock and I got to be good friends, actually," says the actress. "He was so lovely, and then we were both cops on television. He would visit the set and drop in once in a while and we'd see each other socially occasionally over at Dinah Shore's. He was just wonderful."

"Vadim was called Vadim, not Roger, because I think that really was his first name. He was Russian-French, so if I say 'Vadim' it's because that's what Jane [Fonda] called him. He was a very lascivious, very sensual, very sexy Frenchman—or Russian—but very French in culture. He was a little bit out of his element directing an American comedy, that's why I think it doesn't quite work. Vadim was more outwardly fun and didn't take it as seriously as say Lewis Milestone. Being French, it was hard

"BIG BAD MAMA had lots of nudity. The morals were upside down. I went from being slapped by a future president to sharing my lover with my young girls."



Contending with Frank Grimes, co-star Sammy Davis, Jr. (l) pitched Dickinson for the OCEAN'S 11 role. (R) Odd couple Jack Klugman and James Mason in GUN THE MAN DOWN (1956), co-produced by John Wayne.



for him to explain what he wanted. He would take me by the shoulders and put me in place and say, 'You stand there.' He said, 'I wish I could direct by calling out do number 23.' He wasn't that great with the English subtleties. He was much more casual."

The actress becomes persuasive for a moment, trying to recall the actor who played heartthrob Ponce de Leon Harper. "Who was the young man I slept with?" she asked. "Oh, John David Carson! I was Miss Smith, the young sexy teacher, and Rock Hudson wanted me to break John David Carson into sex because he couldn't stop having erections in class. Rock played head of the athletics department and, I think, he wanted John to play football and stop having hard-ons in class. So he thought if Miss Smith got to him, and broke him in, he'd be fine. So Miss



Smith, seeing that as a way to get to Rock Hudson, played along with it and got herself in bed with the young man. And enjoyed every minute of it."

The only word-of-mouth attributed to PRETTY MAIDS was provoked by Dickinson's bared buns. Hired by B-movie maverick Roger Corman to play BIG BAD MAMA ('74), the ac-

tress afforded audiences plenty of southern—and northern—exposure. The film made a fortune. Sipping her coffee, Dickinson notes, "BIG BAD MAMA had lots of violence, just shooting right and left. And a lot of nudity: sharing a bed with my daughters, sharing a bed with my lover! The morals were totally upside down. So I come from being slapped by the future president, with him saying, 'I told you to get on home,' to sharing my lover with my two young girls."

"I had to learn the machine gun, of course. There was some marvelous direction by Steve Carver, especially the machine gun scenes which I thought were well choreographed. The bedbugs were fabulous and quite exciting. Even though it was a small picture, it's an awfully good picture if it weren't a carbon copy of BONNIE AND CLYDE,



"POLICE WOMAN's Sgt. Anderson was vulnerable but brave. And she was hot. She knew she had the 'assets' that worked, but didn't egotistically abuse 'em."



POINT BLANK (w/ Lee Remick & Dickinson) was banned for its violence in '67, but critics now regard the film as a classic ("A fiery revenge thriller," *Dominic Garrity*, R). Originally shot for NBC, THE KILLERS (w/ John Cassavetes) was judged too violent for TV. R The '64 release was Ronald Reagan's last film

which it is. The music was copied. The scenes were copied. Forgetting that, it was damn good."

The surfeit of sex and nudity was unswerving, even for the the swinging '60s. Furthermore, audiences could hardly acclimate themselves to an actress of Dickinson's calibre—a genuine movie star—stripping for a shoot-'em-up. Dickinson wondered

what the fuss was all about: it wasn't the first time that she peeped for the camera. "I had to do a nude scene in POINT BLANK '67," she confirms, "but it was very subtle. Oh, I had a couple of other scenes, but I don't think one of them made it to the screen. I have photos in the shower. YOUNG BILLY YOUNG '68) was a film I did with Robert Mitchum. I had to be nude in that. But there was a lot of it in BIG BAD MAMA, and you had William Shatner in it. Later, we became heroes."

The obligatory nude scenes proved less than problematic for Dickinson. "There wasn't much to prepare for [laughs]. Just bite the bullet. Reger Corman's production was akin to a TV schedule. We did that movie in 20 days, fast and furious. The other films that I did were much more leisurely and sane. Time is really the big difference on these B-films."

On the heels of the Corman film, Dickinson slammed another ground-breaker. The substantive role that eluded her on film would finally be accessible on television. Earlier in the year, she had appeared as Lisa Beaumont in *The Gambler*, an episode of the NBC's long running series, POLICE STORY (1973-77). The show's executive producer, David Gerber—eager to sell the actress on a conception caught up with Dickinson on the Santa Monica set of BIG BAD MAMA: she was performing a scene where her title character discovers both randy daughters (Susan Sennott and Robbie Lee) whipping into an impromptu strip-tease for rednecks. As soon as Dickinson wrapped the scene, Gerber tried to push a proposed weekly series called POLICE WOMAN. No sale. Dickinson wasn't interested in the grueling demands of television. The frenzied pace on BIG BAD MAMA had worn her out and a series would only perpetuate the time constraints and manic sched-





Dickinson's legs eventually inspired by Universal Studios, drew an awestruck public to THE SPARKLE BUSH. Critic Daniel Petrie reckoned himself w/ RASSEN IN THE SUN & FORT APACHE, THE BROSKE.

ule "But they talked me into it," laughs Dickinson, who signed on for a four year stint as—what was her name?

"Her name was Sgt. Leigh Ann 'Pepper' Anderson. They kept getting it wrong and sometimes would call me Suzanne! If you watch all 91 episodes, I'm sometimes Leigh Ann and sometimes Suzanne because that's how fast we put it together. I signed in May and we started shooting July 5th, the day after the holiday. It went together so fast."

Another big problem. Dickinson's TV character was a sexy but civil all-American girl who, as a member of a vice squad team, busted scumbags. On the other hand, her BIG BAD MAMA—a promiscuous floozy and lousy mother

"My most violent death scene? DRESSED TO KILL. Brian De Palma was maddening. I said to him, 'You were a son of a bitch to work for,' and he said, 'I know I was!'"



all." Uh-huh. All right, yes. The film's controversy, in fact, heated-up the ratings.

POLICE WOMAN was a Nielsen smash. It's likely that the show's longevity was partially attributed to Dickinson's short skirts. "Pepper was brave and she was fun," affirms the actress. "She was also vulnerable but brave enough to cover her vulnerability. She would go in and do her duty, despite her fears. And she was hot. She knew she had assets that worked and she used them in the right way, not with ego. It was just that she knew if she was pretending to be a hawker, she could hook somebody and solve the case. She was wise about herself and she enjoyed her fellow workers. She had no problem with the men or the feminist thing, because she liked men and got along with them great."

Unfortunately, by the show's fourth season, Dickinson's frequent turns as a call girl or gun moll began to wear thin. "And that's why we only went four years," she giggles. "It became very predictable. You just ran out of stories. Earl Holliman and I—but mostly Earl ['Lt. Bill Crowley']—were always fighting for better scripts that were a little bit less obvious. The network's idea for this show was not something as serious as **POLICE STORY**; they wanted an entertainment show. A little T&A and a lot of reality, but it just got to be monotonous. We'd joke that it was like being tied to the railroad tracks once more. We always knew she was going to get into jeopardy and they just got to be too much alike."

"But my **POLICE WOMAN** was the first of the female cop shows. It was the first hour show that starred a woman other than a comedienne. That's often overlooked. There was no woman starring in an hour show."

Hence, she earned her goal. **POLICE WOMAN** was syndicated globally. And



Impressed with her glamour, **Police** producers lured Dickinson to come over to their country. **T: DRESSED TO KILL**, helmed by Brian DePalma.

who just kept bustin' out of her cotton dresses—was brewing-up some serious controversy. Rumors suggested the residual publicity could be crippling. "I was up front with the producers," shrugs Dickinson. "I told them, 'You know, I'm nude in this movie.' But they thought it was a small movie and wouldn't have any bearing on the series at



Dickinson, in her mid-40s, was portrayed as a very sensual but assertive heroine who was just one of the guys. Think any of the BAYWATCH babes will make a similarly smooth transition into middle age? Uh-huh. "But, ohhhh. I'm still tired from that," Dickinson moans. "I only signed for four years. That's all I would give them in a contract. I think that if I had signed for five years, the show would have been sustained into a fifth year. It was very hard, harder on my husband than it was on my daughter who was only seven when we started. Not coming home for dinner for eight months of the year is really rough. It certainly wasn't my husband's idea of a nice marriage. So, after a season and a half, he split. That's not to say we wouldn't have split anyway, but it was really hard.

"It's all about when the woman is the head of the household, and I was because he worked at home but I did all the marketing and cooking and everything. And if I'm not there bringing home dinner, it takes its

GIRL OF RACHEL CADE. Dickinson, cast in title role 150 years, "It was nothing when we made it but 30 years later, after Patsy Stone, Roger Moore and I got famous, the film holds up!"



toil."

Two years later, the 49-year-old Dickinson returned to the screen, as a practitioner of infidelity, in Brian De Palma's **DRESSED TO KILL** (1980). Lathering-up in the expository shower scenes, her nudity delivered press and audiences. This time around, she wasn't unaffiliated to a gran-totin' cartoon character; nevertheless, her anti-heroine drew fire from feminists. Dickinson plays Kate Miller, a woman whose sexual fantasies culminate in a punitive fate.

"Oh, I've been dying for years," smiles Dickinson. "I did a lot of westerns before **RO BRAVO** and I've died a lot of times but **BIG BAD MAMA** was the most poetic one. It was kind of a nice

"I liked THE DON'S ANALYST because of the colorful characters. My role isn't boring. All my life, I've had a lot of bland roles & I tried to make 'em interesting."



A. 1980: Reunited by Arthur Penn, Dickinson played Marlon Brando's wife in **THE CHASE** (80). C: Peter Fonda and Roger Moore in **SWI DP RACHEL CADE**. R. With Gregory Peck as CAPT. NEWMAN, M.D. Above: As **POLICE WOMAN** in her TV series (1975-78).

death scene, and I really like how they did that. But the most violent was certainly **DRESSED TO KILL**. She has gone off to have an affair with the guy that she met at the museum. As she gets dressed, she leaves him a note saying it was terrific but she has to go home to her husband. She leaves in the elevator but, halfway down, she remembers that

she left her wedding ring back in the apartment. She doesn't realize that she's being stalked by her psychiatrist. He has an inner side and an outer side. The inner side was a man who is angry at the outer side for lustful after my character, so he had to kill her.

"When she gets off the elevator, to go back and get her ring, she gets slashed and slashed by the psychiatrist who's disguised—actually, cross-dressing—as a woman. The slashing just took one day to shoot. Michael Westmore, the great prosthetics man for all these killings, had made up the prosthetics for my hand and my throat and where ever else I was going to get slashed. It was all rigged and very, very tedious so when he slashes with that razor, the blood comes out."

Dickinson, who's worked with some acclaimed directors, admits her opinion of De Palma is decidedly mixed: "He was maddening and wonderful. We've become very, very good friends. I once said to him, 'You were a son of a bitch to work for' and he said, 'I know I was.' He hates shooting his movies. He loves pre-production, he loves writing the script but he just hates the tedium of shooting a movie and he does it very carefully and detailed. So it is tedium."

I ask her for some commentary on **RESURRECTION OF ZACHARY WHEELER**, a '71 movie—shot on video—about organ transplants and cloning. While her memory of the film is dim, she and director Bob Wynn have become friends over the years. "When they cloned the sheep last year, Bob called and reminded me that we did that a long time ago. All I remember is that I was a nurse and I'm in on this transference of this body or spirit or whatever."

Still extremely active, Dickinson concluded last year with guest appearances on ABC's **ELLEN** and



CBS' DIAGNOSIS MURDER. She was also cast in **THE DON'T ANALYST**, a feature produced by the Movie Channel, with Robert Loggia, Kevin Pollak and Sherilyn Fenn. Quicker scenario: When the head of a crime family decides that his mob should give up the old ways and turn legit, his two wacky sons think it's time for him to see a shrink.

"I enjoyed it because it is so absurd," explains Dickinson. "Loggia, the Don, hates me and I hate him yet somehow we stay together. It's comedy but you have to play it straight, which was very hard. Pollak, as the psychiatrist, is so funny I would be happy to just sit and watch him breathe. Mine is not a boring role. It was very special not to be bland. I've had a lot of bland roles all my life, and I tried to make them interesting."

I unfold an old clipping that insisted Dickinson's legs had been insured for a million dollars. True? "They were indeed, and in those days a million dollars meant something. After I got out of Warner Bros., I was offered the role in **CAPTAIN NEWMAN M.D.** (63) with Gregory Peck and Tony Curtis. Universal said I wouldn't get the role unless I signed a seven-year contract. It was at a time in my career where I felt I had to make a



Playing the title role as **JESSICA**, Dickinson mixed it up with Italian bombshell Sylvia Koscina. Trainers and role for the film stressed Dickinson's athletic schtick (posed on motor scooter, clad in silver-shorts). The film was helmed by Jean Negulesco, who's **BOY ON A DOLPHIN** (57) turned Sophia Loren—surviving broken from water—into a popular pinup.

change, and I was thinking of moving to Paris because they liked my work over there. The French loved **THE KILLERS** and **RIO BRAVO**. I thought I would go there and make my mark, but **CAPTAIN NEWMAN** came along so I had to sign the contract; however, I didn't like what Universal

did. The studio had to promote you, so they put me in **CAPTAIN NEWMAN** and then **THE ART OF LOVE** with James Gardner and Dick Van Dyke. In **CAPTAIN NEWMAN**, they wanted to promote the film and myself so they insured my legs and did a lot of photography with them. I was in *Life* magazine standing over a bag of money with black stockings on my legs. That's a great shot, but it was about the studio not about me. I asked them, 'Are you sure this is for real?' because I always hated those publicity gimmicks that, as a kid, I had read about and been fooled. They said, 'Oh yeah, it's for real. Just don't ask us for how long.' And I didn't. I have a feeling it was for about a week."

Dickinson's sister suffers from Alzheimer's disease, the actress' more somber, public appearances have been before Congress to fund an antidote: "I do as much as I can. I go to a lot of the fundraisers, galas

and talk shows to raise money for research. There seems to be a stigma to it because they think you're crazy. *Larry King* said to me on the air, 'Did you hesitate to come out about this?' I never even realized that there was a stigma, but I guess there must be. It's such a frightening disease because we're all vulnerable. More people should know about it." □

Dickinson in last year's **NATIONAL LAMPDOON'S THE DON'T ANALYST**. "I enjoyed it because it's so absurd."



CHARLIE CHAN & THE CURSE OF THE DRAGON QUEEN (1987): Peter Onorati's sleuth & Dickinson's Dragon Queen investigate disappearing booties.



HORROR HOTEL



'50s Screamers

VENETIA STEVENSON

CAST IN A '50S SLEEPER, THE SHORT-LIVED LODGER OF "HORROR HOTEL" FLIPPED FROM ACTING TO PRODUCING.

BY BRUCE G. HALLENBECK

Nan struggles with the witches as they drag her down the passage... Mrs. Newless, Kern & Driscoll, and other witches are gathered around the stone slab. Nan is held by the warlocks, she turns suddenly and tries to run away. The two warlocks lead Nan to the stone slab, flinging her onto it. Mrs. Newless raises a dagger, Driscoll at her side. Nan screams: "No...No...No!" Mrs. Newless raises the dagger. She stabs down with it viciously. Nan screams once more. CUT TO: Closeup of knife cutting into birthday cake...From the original shooting script of CITY OF THE DEAD by George Baxt

Poor Nan. Her distinction in "horror history" is that she was the first heroine to be killed off less than halfway through a movie. A British production, filmed in 1969, CITY OF THE DEAD was released in the U.S. as HORROR HOTEL. Based on a story by prolific producer/writer Milton Subotsky (DR. TERROR'S HOUSE OF HORRORS, TALES FROM THE CRYPT, etc.), the 1960 U.S. release was actually made before PSYCHO convoluted clichés with the equally unpredictable demise of Janet Leigh's "working girl" in the shower. Venetia Stevenson, who played Nan, was by as calibrated on



Facing: the Belgian poster from HORROR HOTEL. Top: "I was embarrassed by this scene in which I had to wear this black push-up bra. Here was this girls college student and she undresses and wears a busier!"

the same scale of celebrity as Leigh, nor did HORROR HOTEL provoke the same notoriety as PSYCHO: but Stevenson and her memorable movie have done quite well since, thank you.

True, Stevenson will be indelibly linked to the horror slooper, which has been granted was a second life via its premiere on laser disc (Elite). But its likely that even the film's legion of admirers have not been enlightened to Stevenson's activity since checking out of HORROR HOTEL. Well, try this one on for size: she's a film producer, whose resume includes a genre title (DEAN R. KOONTZ'S SERVANTS OF TWILIGHT).

Speaking from her home in Southern California, Stevenson reminisced about her dual careers: "I manage directors now, and one of my clients is Sam Irvin, who did a picture called ACTING ON IMPULSE (2:1). Linda Fiorentino, who co-starred in MEN IN BLACK, played the lead. There's a scene where HAPPY DAYS' Dennis Moot is reading a mock-up of *Femme Fatales* with Linda Fiorentino on the cover. Brinke Stevens, one of your staffers, was also in



Stevenson as a comely castaway in *ISLAND OF LOST WOMEN*: "The costumes were considered risqué. But this was in '68." Critic John Stanley: "It's a pulp-inspired adventure. There's a death ray & other overused fantasy elements."

They Turned A Forbidden Paradise Into A Raging Hell...

when they dared to leave the extraordinary creature hidden from the world on the

Island of Lost Women



that movie. Naturally, I'm very familiar with the magazine."

Stevenson is pleasantly surprised by HORROR HOTEL's "rebirth" in the modern media. "When my friend went to the video store to buy the laserdisc," she related, "they said it sold out the first week. The owner finally said he'd sell me the copy he had just bought for himself. So that's the copy I have. You know, I don't have any idea how I could scream like I did in that film. Last Saturday night, I had my friends sitting around watching HORROR HOTEL. It was very hard for me to watch myself on-screen so, during my death scene, I kind of walked out of the room. And everybody said, 'How did you scream like that? You're usually so quiet?' I remember having to do that and being very hoarse afterwards. Screaming is one of the hardest things to do! I don't know if I could do it again."

Stevenson is a child of the motion picture business. Anna Lee, Steven-

son's mother, appeared in the likes of BEDLAM (1946), with Boris Karloff, and FORT APACHE with John Wayne. She's still flexing her acting muscles on the afternoon soap, GENERAL HOSPITAL. Her father is the late Robert Stevenson, a Brit director who was brought to this country by mogul David Selznick. "He did some film noir-type pictures for Howard Hughes," Stevenson continued. "He did a film called MY FORBIDDEN PAST (1951) with Ava Gardner and Robert Mitchum. He did a lot of television: he was one of the early directors on GUNSMOKE. Then he went to Disney and did most of the great Disney live-action pictures: MARY POPPINS, OLD YELLER, THE ABSENT-MINDED PROFESSOR, THE LOVE BUG. In fact, before Spielberg came along, my father had the record for grossing more money than any other director."

Born in England, Stevenson cruised to the States with her parents when she was a child. She returned to her native country in the late '50's and was cast in JUKEBOX, "a television series. I was 'the American' on a panel that mind record albums."

"My absolute first film was a picture that Alan Ladd produced called ISLAND OF LOST WOMEN. I was one of three femme fatales! The others were June Blair, who ended up marrying David Nelson of OZZIE AND HARRIET, and Diane Jergens. It was about three women and their father who are cast away on an island. I don't remember the plot too well. I do remember that the costumes we wore were considered risqué. They were kind of like sarongs, but they pretty much covered everything. Of course, this was in 1959...[pause]...Actually, I was never a femme fatale. I mean, I was never the bad girl. I never killed anyone in a movie, although I got killed a lot."

Less than one year later, Stevenson signed-on for HORROR HOTEL. The draw for horror fans was Hammer veteran Christopher Lee as Driscoll, a professor who moonlights as a blood-thirsty warlock. Although produced on a low budget, the film walls in a

"I was very impressed with the set: I'd never have thought HORROR HOTEL was a low-budget film."

dark, Lovecraftian-styled ambience. "I don't know what the budget was," said Stevenson. "I was only involved as an actress, so I probably didn't even read the whole script! I remember the first day at Shepperton Studios, I very impressed with the set: It was all dressed in fog. Looking back, I never would have thought that was a low-budget picture, compared to other films that I'd done. There were plenty of creative people around."

The movie was directed by John Moxey (aka John Llewellyn Moxey) who, eleven years later, helmed a made-for-TV classic, *THE NIGHT STALKER*. "He's a very good director," Stevenson recalled. "I mainly remember a whole day of screaming. I don't remember how he got it out of me, but there was take-after-take of it. Christopher Lee was a very nice man. I didn't think he was very scary. Very distant, though. I may be wrong, but I think I remember him sitting on the set doing the *London Times* crossword puzzle."

Recounting her "moosey shot," the actress lifted her head and exclaimed: "I remember being embarrassed by this scene in which I had to wear what they called a 'Merry Widow.' It was this black push-up bra thing. It seemed kind of inappropriate for the character. Here was this kind of prim college student, and she undresses and she's wearing this bustier!"

Shortly after, Stevenson did a guest appearance on *ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS* for CBS. "It was an episode with Burt Reynolds and Harry Dean Stanton [*Escape to Sonoma*, 6/26/90]. As I remember, I was either kidnapped or held hostage. My dress was ripped through the whole show. I think Harry was the bad guy and Burt was the good guy. Once again, I was the victim. But *HORROR HOTEL* was my one—and only!—long, drawn-out screaming role!"

Tallying only a little more than a half dozen film credits—stuff like William Wellman's *DARBY'S RANGERS* and some Westerns (*DAY OF THE OUTLAW*, *SEVEN WAYS FROM SUNDOWN*)—Stevenson resisted illu-



7) "I never liked being an actress," admits Stevenson. "I wanted to be a writer." 8) She recalls Christopher Lee, her *HORROR HOTEL* co-star, as "a nice man. I didn't think he was scary. Very distant, though."



sions of Hollywood stardom. "I never liked being an actress," she explained. "I was always embarrassed—I'm still embarrassed—to see myself on the screen. I wanted to be a writer. Then I got married and I had two children."

"HORROR HOTEL is one of a number of films I made at that time—and certainly not one I would have thought would be remembered. I'm very proud to have been associated with it, I really am! I've never been particularly a fan of the horror pictures. I really like Hitchcock. There are some pictures like *LES DIABOLIQUES* (1964) that I really like. But when horror films lapsed into all the special effects and blood—you know, mad killers after a sorority or something—I just thought they were kind of brainless."

Stevenson hopes that the trendy penchant for Gothic melodramas (*BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*) will turn into a habit: "They can be a real venue for creativity, especially for cinematographers. I'd like to see some good black and white movies made although—commercially, I guess—that would be difficult."

She should know. Stevenson is one of Hollywood's busiest independent producers. "It's a profession that took a long time to get into. As I say, I got married; I was wed to Don Everly of the Everly Brothers. We were married for nine years. Then, when we were divorced, I knew that I didn't want to get back into acting. I really didn't know what I was going to do in the business. I worked for a friend of mine in the publicity field, and then I became a script reader. I never left Los Angeles after that. Then I went to work for a production company as a story editor, then got into producing."

Stevenson has been involved as executive or line producer on "many, many films," including Walter Hill's cat 'n' mouse thriller, *SOUTHERN COMFORT* (1981), and an IMAX film chronicling the Grand Canyon. She noted that the latter movie "plays six times a day at the Grand Canyon, and often plays at other IMAX theaters. The last picture I produced was from a Dean Cainz book, *SERVANTS OF*



"Earl Rayzette and me on *ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS* (SERVANTS episode). My dress was ripped through the whole shoe. Once again, I was the victim."

TWILIGHT. I was recently thought about Patricia Jessel [*HORROR HOTEL*'s pivotal witch] when I was watching Grace Zabriskie in *SERVANTS OF TWILIGHT*. She played this sort of witch character who could make blood appear in her palm. I guess she basically played the Patricia Jessel part."

Stevenson grieves that, unlike the generation when her parents were making movies, the stragglers for today's film production is less challenging. "Back then, producers had ultimate power and they were really creative people. They could basically get what they wanted made. The studio system now is run by committees. That's why screenplays often turn out badly, because everybody has to have a say in them. Everybody's afraid of making a mistake and losing their jobs, so they go for the easy way out. It's the safe way of getting things done, and people are afraid of taking chances. It's their job, you know. Financially, there's a lot more at stake. I

suppose Steven Spielberg can pretty much do what he wants, and there may be a handful of producers who can, but nowadays if you can get a movie produced, you're really lucky. It's very hard. The independent market now is tough. The money isn't there. We have to satisfy the foreign market, cast it with people who mean something for video... ultimately, to produce a film now, you have to be lucky. Before, you had to be talented!"

Insisting she's not the breed of schizophrenic depicted in Hollywood "tell-all" books, Stevenson attributes her demeanor to "being highly organized. That's what 'producing' is all about: watching the dollars and dealing with people. You don't have to be the stereotypical man with the cigar. That's not what a producer is anymore."

I couldn't let Stevenson get away without asking about an old friend of hers: "Yeah, I know Elvis Presley," she said wistfully. "Elvis was just a really very nice Southern boy. He was very shy. I wouldn't call him a macho kind of person. He was really a fish out of water in Hollywood, back in the late fifties, when I knew him. I don't remember how I

met him, actually. I never worked with him. I met him when he was in town. I went to Graceland once. We know each other for quite awhile. I look at pictures of Elvis when he was young, and he was a really good-looking guy. I don't know that I was really aware of that then. He photographed really well. We were friends for about four or five years. I met him shortly after he came to town, and he was living in a hotel. Not a horror hotel..."

As a result of working on his television show, Stevenson struck an acquaintance with Alfred Hitchcock, with whom her father fraternized: "Although a lot of people didn't like him personally, my father never spoke badly of him. He seemed to really like him. The person I was really impressed with was Joan Harrison. She wrote several of his movies, and worked very closely with him in production. She just died last year. She was the first woman executive producer/writer I'd ever seen. She was attractive and good

STEVENSON

"I like Hitchcock, but horror films turned brainless with blood, special effects, sadism & sorority girls."

at what she did, she was a good role model. She may have been my inspiration to get into production."

Wearing still another hat, Stevenson is currently developing a book titled *Starlets from A to Z*. Co-written with Ed Margulies (*Bad Movies We Love*), the former actress notes their collaborative research "goes back as far back as Anna May Wong and works its way up to Models, Inc. Although it doesn't have a publisher yet, we're working on a proposal right now."

With a number of projects in preparation—none of which she'll talk about yet—the ex-thespian returns to work. Her mission: rehabilitate an industry that keeps tripping on its costars. Not exactly a job for a femme fatale. But perfect for the next Joan Harrison. Your move, Ms. Stevenson. □

HORROR HOTEL. Right, it "I had to wear Merry Widow lingerie." Center & R: Stevenson's abduction by Satanist; we've spared her bloody immolation with a jump-cut to a knife cutting a birthday cake. Bottom: Jack Davis' sell for U.S. campaign.



KARINA LOMBARD

SWORD & SORCERY STUNNER

DEBUTING IN '93 AS A VOODOO-VEXED SEXPOT, THE EX-MODEL
LATER CONQUERED "KULL'S" BOXOFFICE FAILURE.

BY JAMES VAN HISE

Describing the actress' debut as leading lady, critic Roger Ebert gushed, "She is a beautiful woman who lives caught in a web of superstition and fear...a beautiful, sultry, high-spirited young mulatto woman of the islands." Karina Lombard was subsequently cast as decorative but dispensable "fantasy women"; she's the embodiment of Harlequin paperback covers. But the Tahiti-born Lombard didn't prioritize acting as her personal vocation.

"It all began in New York," she recounts. "I had just come out of school. I was in a restaurant and [fashion photographer] Bruce Webber saw me and that's how I got into modeling. When it was happening, I didn't understand because modeling was miles and miles away from my thoughts. But, apparently, Bruce just does that sometimes: just picks people and makes them work like crazy. So it was a really nice way to start modeling. But modeling can be quite dangerous when you're young. If you're just starting, and you don't know anybody, you may be dealing with photographers of dubious interest. But it was great to start at the top, and work with



Karina Lombard congratulates Kevin Sorbo for going against stereotypes with *KULL*. "It was a fine opportunity to make a fairy tale film for kids."

all these people.

"It was a great part of my life. I didn't do it very long because acting happened really fast. I got my first film from the cover of a magazine. So I pulled away from modeling pretty fast. I didn't do it that long but, at the time, it was incredible: all this traveling, the fabulous clothes and being treated really well. As long as you look good."

She looked good enough to model for the likes of *ELLE*, *Vogue*, and a myriad of fashion magazines. Lombard was also hired to strike poses for Calvin Kline campaigns and posed her trade overseas: "Even though I started in New York, I got flown to Europe and traveled

around London, Italy, France and Spain. So it was a period where I traveled a lot, and it was great. But I never felt fulfilled by modeling. I felt it was very superficial, but I met some wonderful people—and some people who were not so fantastic. But all in all, because of the level I started in, people were fantastic. Sometimes you work with some fantastic artists who just come up with great ideas."

But Lombard acknowledges that "drama" is more substantial than affording a model the opportunity to thaw-out. "Killer looks" just can't buy studio contracts

nor longevity: sample the film careers of supermodels Cindy Crawford (*FAIR GAME*) and Kathy Ireland (*MOM AND DAD SAVE THE WORLD*), which were less than short-lived.

"I think that modeling and acting are very dangerous together," explains Lombard. "If you do modeling, and then you get into acting, you can fall into the trap of looking at yourself constantly. And that is very dangerous. But, for me, it gave me a sense of the camera and how to tell a story with your face and your movements and all that. But you have to definitely get away from looking at yourself, because that's the trouble with models—you're constantly



Lombard klutzes with Fabio a KALL. "It was a very strong female character so I loved it! The film was really about the forces of evil versus the forces of good, and how 'good' wins. I really love the message."

thinking. *This is a good body position, a good profile*—you consciously know this. But if you do that in acting, you're dead because you look really phony."

Lombard landed her initial film appearance—without dramatic training—in *THE ISLAND*, which she describes as a "fairy tale. It's basically a story about this princess who falls in love with a white man, and it's all about the problems that arise because of racism. They have to escape and fight the bad people, and then end up together at the end. It was a beautiful story, too. That was about 1990. Then I came back to New York and studied acting, because I hadn't done that yet." But she was determined to remedy this, Karina studied acting for a year and dropped out of modeling.

Dropping out of fashion photography, Lombard enrolled in acting classes

and—during the course of one year—disciplined herself into dramatic development. "I didn't want to model anymore because I was afraid of losing the perception of acting," says Lombard. "I studied in New York, which is really oriented towards acting, toward feeling things and experiencing things and going through the whole process of suffering and starving. But I think that it was really good that I stopped modeling at that time, because it really helped me get into acting. I think if you do both at once, when you're not very sure of yourself at the beginning, it can really be dangerous. I think that was a good move to do that. It made things a little harder, but it was great."

But her easting in *THE DOORS* (1991), as a "Warhol actress," hardly tested Lombard's mettle. "Well, if you

KARINA LOMBARD

"I haven't done as many films as I could have because I wanted to keep an integrity in my roles."

blinked in that one you didn't see me," she laughs. "I was in the Andy Warhol scene in *The Factory*. That was great because I was still in acting school, and they want you to finish before you go out and audition. But it was a cattle call, and I went about five times, and then finally they called and said [director] Oliver Stone would like to meet me. So I prepared a monologue, because I figured he had seen the other scenes over and over again. But this was really risky because it was a monologue from *Madame Butterfly*, and he loved it and he said you've got the part."

Stone offered her a fleeting role as "Mina," a Warhol groupie and European aristocrat who's perpetually high and has an affair with Jim Morrison. "It was great to be on such a huge set and see how Oliver works, because he does a lot of improv," Karina recalls. Three months before the film opened to mediocre business, Stone wrote Lombard a letter that lauded her performance but cautioned the 4-hour running time prompted severe pruning. Lombard's pivotal scenes were among the casualties. "Nevertheless, it was really sweet of him to do that," she shrugs. "And so, after that, it just evolved."

Directed by John Duigan (*FLIRT-ING*) in *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*, the fledgling actress' screen exposure expanded to a much grander scale. Cast as "Antoinette Cosway" in the Jane Eyre prequel, her character is absorbed into a milieu of hybridized "sex-

THE FIRM with Tom Cruise: "I had just done the leading role in *WIDE SARGASSO SEA* and then my agent said, 'There's a small part in the Cruise movie, but I think you could do a great job with it.' The character has everything against her because she makes Tom betray his wife! But I wanted people to like me and understand her."





Lombard was cast as KULL's slave girl, Zorita. "We shot all of the scenes stuff in Croatia and the rest of it in Sicilian locations. I did all my own stunts, though I wore this flimsy dress while the real one was smooch."

ual fireworks [and] native magic." Roger Ebert wasn't the only critic smitten by Lombard, whose erotic scenes drew an NC-17 rating. Reviewer William Burrell breathlessly described her as "Jamaica personified—hot, sultry mystical."

She subsequently played an 18th-billed role, as "Young Woman on Beach," in *THE FIRM* (1993). "It was interesting because I had done *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*, which was the lead," notes Lombard, "and then my agent

sent me the script for *THE FIRM* and he said, 'It's a small part but I think you could do a great job with it.' When I first read it, I thought, 'Oh, no, I'm not going to play a freaking whore...but then, as I thought about it, I thought, 'No, to the contrary, I want people to like the character and understand why she's doing that,' which is really a challenge. The character has everything against her because she makes Tom Cruise betray his wife. But when I saw the film, I thought, 'I got it

through. You didn't hate her!'"

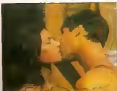
And then a slight blush irradiates her cheeks. "When I got on the set I thought, 'Tom! Ooh, my God! Tom Cruise.' So that was great, and Sydney Pollack is a wonderful director. And I got so much publicity from that film. Even though it's brief, everybody remembers that part."

"After that, I had to wait a long time because I kept getting offered either femme fatales or whores. People said, 'Oh, she can do that really well.' But I haven't done as many movies as I could have after *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*. Why? Because I've always wanted to keep an integrity in my roles and play characters that are strong, and I stayed away from degrading characters. And, when you refuse to do certain parts, the process takes longer. You have to have patience, and know that the great parts are going to come along. You have to wait for them."

"After *THE FIRM*, I wanted to play a mother, a good woman. So I wasted quite a long time for *LEGENDS OF THE FALL* (1994), which I really loved and I think it was a good thing to have waited for that. I constantly want to play a variety of roles so I won't be pigeonholed. You can't say, 'Oh, that's what she is—that's what she plays. So it's just as well to wait, and to constantly do different characters, so that you don't get pigeonholed into one thing."

Nevertheless, Lombard's *LEGENDS* heroine, an Indian maiden named Isabel Two, is wiped-out not long after she's introduced to the audience. Similarly, her damsel-in-distress in *LAST MAN STANDING* (1996), a remake of Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*, is only marginally developed as a result of her brief on-screen visibility. Less than one year later, Lombard was cast as "Zorita, a beautiful slave girl" in *KULL THE CONQUEROR*, a sword 'n' sorcery epic played for grins. "I loved the part and I think it's a very good role," she said. "She's a very strong female character, so I loved it! The film was a fairy tale and, as a kid, I used to love fairy tales. I thought it

in *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*, a prequel to *Jane Eyre*, Lombard's scheming (with Michael Parker as "Rochester") gave the film an NC-17 rating, reducing the U.S. boxoffice to \$1.65 million. Most critics were impressed, except for *Washington Post* staffer Rita Kempley: "It's cutie-babe pornography with sound effects."



was a great opportunity to make a film for children that's really nice, and it was really lovely to attend the premiere and see all of those kids! I loved them all excited. So it's great. I love that aspect of it. And Kevin Sorbo, who plays the title character, his HERCULES TV series is still big all over the world!

Though KULL grossed a non-toxic-totest \$6 million in the U.S., Lombard is "very proud to be part of the film. It's really about the forces of evil versus the forces of good, and the whole process of how 'good' wins. I really love the message. I love the special effects that were tied-in with my character. At one point, the evil one [The Carver] is turning into a monster and it's all red around her; but they put a beautiful white light around me, so it's like my character is protected by God and by all that is good and beautiful. She appears invulnerable to evil, and it's a really beautiful image."

The film was shot right next door to Bosnia. Lombard describes the war-torn neighboring environment as "really weird. But we were on the ocean. We shot all the ocean stuff in Croatia and the rest of it was in Slovakia." One of the shipboard scenes obligated the actress to hang onto a rope for a dunk in the drink. She declined a body double: "I did all my own stunts. I was covered with bruises and it was pretty bad, but I really wanted to do all my stunts, after all, when you do action-adventure films, you've got to be ready to do that."

"The water was really cold. We were shooting in September and it was freezing—even though it doesn't look like it. Nobody wanted to go into the water. They didn't even have guys go under the water to check, because we were so far out in the middle of nowhere that they'd see no land! We'd go out in a little boat in the morning for two hours, and we'd rendezvous with this huge boat that would pull the KULL vessel into the ocean. All in the middle of nowhere. Thank God I don't have much fear of sharks, but it was kind of strange to be in the water and floating around and hoping that nothing was going to bite me."

But Lombard defensively reminds me that, her fear of being devoured notwithstanding, she performed her own stunts: "It was very nice to be able to do that, and also the horseback riding—and the fighting—because all of the guys in the film are really big and tall. They were armor! I wore only a flimsy dress. It was so funny, but it was also pretty painful. But it was a good shoot. Tough conditions, though. In LEGENDS OF THE FALL, I did all

KARINA LOMBARD

"Upon reading the script for THE FIRM, I thought, 'Not a freaking whore!' But it was really a challenge."



With Aiden Quinn (l) and Brad Pitt (r) in LEGENDS OF THE FALL: "I wanted to play a mother, a good woman. I loved it, it was good to have written for it."

of my own horseback riding even though you don't see much of it. I also did my own horseback riding, side saddle, in WIDE SARGASSO SEA which is kind of a strange way to gallop."

"In the one I'm doing now, A VIOLENT EARTH, I have some fights with cops and stuff. It takes place in the late '60s and '70s. It's based on a true story of the woman who became the head of the revolution. Her goal was to give blacks the same rights that whites already had in New Caledonia. So there's a lot of protests, a lot of fighting with policemen wearing helmets. The film is all Australian and French actors. I'm the only one who comes from the States—quite literally the only one in the crew and cast."

"It's a beautiful story. Basically, it's the history of New Caledonia seen through the eyes of three women; it's through their courage and integrity that they finally witness the change of pace of history. The director is Michael Offer and it's produced in Australia by Crawford Productions."

Lombard, in fact, rejected other film roles while awaiting A VIOLENT EARTH to be organized: "It has been going on for a long time. When I came back from KULL, I got a beautiful letter from the director who said that he had been working on this project for three years. The project was ten years old, and he felt that no one else could play the part. It was a really beautiful letter. There was no script at the time, but I just fell in love with the character; she's just so courageous and strong and vulnerable. She just had all the qualities that make a character beautiful to play. But it took awhile. It was supposed to be shooting in March '97 and then it got pushed back and pushed back, and I was afraid that I wouldn't be available for it. So, basically, I waited for that film to happen. I could have done some other projects but I kept thinking, 'Oh, we're going to shoot next week or next month.' But I don't mind. It's worth it."

"It's been a tough shoot, though, because they don't have as much money



as there is in the States. They also don't have unions, so the conditions are tough. And my character is going through so many emotions, and so many things, that it's very exhausting. But it's worth it. It's a beautiful, beautiful story to tell. It's quite exciting to do this project."

Upon returning to the U.S. from Australia, Lombard tackled DEADLINE, another delayed project attached to her celebrity: "They just wanted to wait and get it right. It's basically old-fashioned film noir. Visually, it's a mixture of GILDA—with the '60s clothes and the hair and all—with the look of the David Bowie's vampire film, THE HUNGER. So it's like the old-fashioned films, which I'm very excited to do. Very glamorous but very heavy. So I love the combination of a heavy subject and this glamorous exterior which I find fascinating. It touches upon subjects that I've always really wanted to talk about. It's a very ambitious film, and I think it's going to be great."

SCREAM QUEENS

JENNIFER LOVE HEWITT & SARAH GELLAR
TALK "SCARY STUFF" AND STEREOTYPES.

By JEANNE ROHRER

She admits it. Sarah Michelle Gellar was "terrified" while shooting I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER. So what spooked her? Recurrent nightmares? Fish hooks? The carnage? "No," laughs Gellar, "it was the scene of me in a bathing suit. That horrified me." The movie, about four teenagers stalked by a hook-wielding avenger after they deep-six a fisherman in a hit and run, debuted on October 19th '97, by Thanksgiving, the film bagged over \$66 million.

The petite Gellar, who plays BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER on the Warner Bros. TV series, initially retitled "Helen Shivers," her "beauty queen" role in LAST SUMMER. "This honestly is the biggest departure for me that I've ever played," she explains. "At first glance, I almost thought this isn't the role for me. I don't want to play the quintessential dumb blonde, some babe in



Hewitt & Gellar spent LAST SUMMER trailing a stalker in the sleeper that spawned a sequel

the woods character. But luckily, with Kevin Williamson's writing, he writes these real people. When you first meet Helen, she is this stereotype who has nothing but her looks going for her. But the problem is that this is what people expected of her. And she does have this burning desire to get out."

Naturally I have to ask if

Gellar ever breaches Helen's vanity.

"I'm a dumb blonde," she laughs and briefly lapses into a pause. "Hell...I'm not even a blonde."

What with the movie scheduled for an imminent video premiere, and a sequel in the works, Gellar is extremely insistent that LAST SUMMER "is not your typical 'schlocky' horror movie. I call it psychological horror, horror that scares the mind. I think Kevin Williamson took the blonde bimbo role to a new level. I think that for so long horror was almost comical, with a high-breasted woman saying,

"Oh look, a bad man!" Helen is not that at all. She makes wrong choices but she fights back."

The character's deflection from yesterday's "scream queen" handle prompts more praise for the screenwriter. "Kevin [Williamson] plays with your mind. You know it's coming, but he surprises you. I think, in horror genre, that's great. I haven't

seen the movie with an audience, though I'd love to. You feed off the audience. Kevin doesn't play it as schlocky horror, no dismemberment—[pause]—Well, there is some gushing, some body parts flying around." Uh-huh.

Gellar is also relieved that Williamson's script isn't a by-the-numbers adaptation of Lois Duncan's novel: "In the book, they hit and kill an eight-year-old boy. There's nothing redeeming about that. And I would have never portrayed the way my character is conceived in the book. The movie's Helen is so much more three-dimensional. I give the credit to Kevin. As a 20-year-old actress who plays high school and college roles, I can vouch there isn't much out there that isn't a caricature. What Kevin did, and what's been done for me with BUFFY, is developing characters into written three-dimensional human beings. As a young person, that's hard to find."

Cynots suspected that BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER wouldn't survive its first season, what with



Jennifer Hewitt & Freddie Prince, Jr.



L: Hewitt and Freddie Prince Jr. on their *SUMMER* vacation. R: The bathing suit, required for her role as Helen, sent shivers down Sarah Michelle Gellar's spine.

female-driven episodes and a tongue-in-cheek slant ("We saved the world. I say we have to party!"). But winning time slots since its debut in March '97, the critically-lauded series is rivaled only by WB's 7TH HEAVEN.

"It's funny. I got very lucky," says Gellar with an "Aw, shucks" shrug. "I got *LAST SUMMER* the same week that *BUFFY* premiered. I went to North Carolina to film the movie, and *BUFFY* wasn't televised in the small town where we were shooting. I was spared from it right away, while all this craze was happening. Apparently, for every Ralph's [a grocery store chain] in L.A., there was a *BUFFY* billboard. But, while I was shooting, I didn't see any of it. I would talk to people here and they would say, 'There are 350 more websites now, and this person downloaded this many times—and I went to this comic book convention and it was crazy.'"

"I had two months to prepare myself for the madness that apparently was the show. And it was

really a nice time for me because if I had been shooting *LAST SUMMER* in L.A., I would have been surrounded by that. Luckily, I had the summer for myself where it was all about the work. And then I went to *SCREAM 2* and then I went back to *BUFFY*—I didn't really have much time left. I don't have two hours to get on the Internet and look. If I have two hours, I'm sleeping."

But—seriously, folks—leisure time is at least partially devoted to a regimen of workouts: staying in

shape is obligatory for a show that requires its heroine to be challenged by vampires. But such maintenance isn't always easy, something she learned on the North Carolina locales...

"They wouldn't let me go to the gym. As *Buffy*, I trained constantly. While we were in Wilmington shooting *LAST SUMMER*, I had access to a great gym. The boys had trainers, I worked out on my own 'cause my trainer was back in L.A. When we moved production down to Southport, I had to

drive an hour a day to go to a gym and I started to feel like that defeated the purpose.

"Well, someone finally opened a gym within Southport, and I was so excited. I tried to enter the facility, but management asked for my driver's license. I figured it was for insurance purposes. Then they said, 'You're not 21. You can't come to the gym.' I was like, 'What? What is this, get your beer and go on the treadmill?' They said it was for insurance and I said, 'Call the movie, I'm sure the movie will pick up the tab for the insurance.' It actually got to the point where they were adamant about it."

Gellar was refused admission, so the studio furnished the actress with her own gym: "They had to build me a small gym in my condo in North Carolina, and we had to rent equipment. And I'd run on the beach every morning."

She encountered more difficulties while adjusting to the Mayberry environment's anti-Hollywood

Prince, Hewitt, Gellar and Ryan Reynolds party after a bit of a run. Gellar prizes Kevin Williamson's deviation from the novel. "I wouldn't have played the book's character."



bias: "They would close restaurants down when they saw us coming. In their defense, you have this small town that pretty much survives on its own and we took over the town. Then DAWSON'S CREEK came in, so now you had two productions on small town turf. People would decide to clean their hunts or saw wood while we were shooting. I grew up in New York City, I live in L.A. I didn't know about small town living. There was no Starbucks."

A week later, I check in with *Jennifer Love Hewitt*. Just for the record, she prefers to be addressed as "Love." Okay, I'll play along. It turns out that Love is just as wimpy as Gellar, her *LAST SUMMER* co-star. Know why? Love was too cowardly to screen a horror film until she was cast in last year's sleeper, *THE PARTY OF FIVE* yet did her homework by making a headline down the local Black-buster's "horror" aisle: "I've actually never seen HALLOWEEN and I probably made a conscious choice not to see it. I didn't want to watch them and mentally get into that mind of picking things, which they do in those movies, and doing them myself. I wanted it to be completely mine. I didn't want to go, 'Oh, Jamie Lee Curtis did that one thing, and that was really cool.' It doesn't become your own and it's not real." (Just as a footnote, the actress reported Curtis in *HOUSE ARREST*: matter of fact, Love—who has three solo albums to her credit—lifted one song, *It's Good To Know I'm Alive*, from the soundtrack of the aforementioned comedy and added it to her CD collection, *Jennifer Love Hewitt*.)

The 18-year-old Love popped a profusion of marginal genre classics into her VCR: *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* ("...not only because it was scary, but because Johnny Depp was in it"), *THE OMEN*, *THE SHINING*, *IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS*, and, of

"Horror was comical with a big-breasted woman gasping, 'A bad man!' I thought the role was not for me, I didn't want to play the quintessential dumb blonde."



Hewitt, Gellar and Phillips: haunted by the past. "I call it psychological horror. It plays with your mind," insists Gellar. "It was great, it's not schlocky horror."



Hewitt and Gellar try to determine whodunnit. "It's better to show that, because you're afraid of something, the female doesn't have to cut up in a ball & cry."



Gellar & sleepover slates, Bridgette Wilson (R). "This is the biggest departure for me I've ever played," says Gellar. "I didn't want to be a babe-in-the-woods."

course, *SCREAM*. "The big thing is for me is I was always scared of horror films," she confesses. "I never wanted to have anything to do with them. So throwing myself into the middle of one kind of helped me overcome my biggest fear. Now I can have a little more fun with them."

The actresses punctuate her conversation with a laughter that's uncommonly hysterical for a diminutive, almost fragile-looking young beauty. Then again, Love and humor often hand together out of necessity: "I seem to work on these shows that have those dark, sadistic storylines. And the people around me are really funny. In *PARTY OF FIVE*, one moment we'll be crying because Scott Wolf's character is an alcoholic and the next moment, Scott will be laughing."

"It's that emotional release. Like in *I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER*: one moment in the ice we did a take, just for dailies, where I see a dead body and scream. And then I reached over, and gave the corpse a big kiss on the cheek, and said, 'You are so beautiful.' There were lots of moments when I got really late at night, like when we were on a boat and we started singing, *Rock the Boat, Baby*. You'd hear us at four in the morning. It was like are we filming *Greece*, with apostrophes going, 'What is going on here?'"

In Love's estimation, working with director Jim Gillespie proved to be the film's most rewarding experience. "He's by far the best director I've ever worked with. He was amazing with our crew, we worked 17-hour days. He never got frustrated and never yelled at the crew, he was always right there to tell us what an amazing job we'd done."

Love is also elated that she personally contributed to the development of "Julie James," the film's morally-conflicted adolescent: "Jim and I had a conversation in regards to Julie. We took her to say, 'I'm going to cry let-



Sarah Michelle Gellar, *BUFFY* and *SCREAM 2* star, is the genre's renaissance female: "There is not much out there that isn't a caricature"

or...break down, later on. I'm going to be strong now and my human instincts are going to help me survive, and I'm going to try to beat the bloody pulp out of this guy if he comes anywhere near me. 'You could have taken it another way when a person in fear becomes completely paralyzed and can't do anything at all.'"

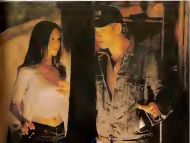
Sharing Ms. Gellar's insight, Love was fond of Julie because the character was bereft of vulnerability and the "screamer" stereotype. "It's better to show that, just because you're afraid of something, it doesn't mean the female has to curl up into a ball and cry in the corner and the male has to step in and do everything Jim want-

ed Julie to be very strong. He wanted her to kick some major butt, whether the guy's around or not. My favorite thing in the movie is that she took care of business."

So now that she has played a tough chick, has Love sustained her immunity to a chronic fear of horror movies? You betcha. Kunda. "When I was seeing

LAST SUMMER for the first time, and at a really intense part, there was a guy sitting behind me who hit his knee on the back of my seat and I was like 'Oh my God,' and I turned around and said, 'Hey buddy, we're watching a scary movie, be careful.' I was just on edge. So he probably thinks I'm so psycho." □

It was only *LAST SUMMER* when Jim Gillespie helmed Hewitt. "He is, by far, the best director I've ever worked with. He was amazing with our crew, we worked 17 hours a day. We were never pulled at, he never got frustrated. He was always there." (R: Gellar, Hewitt & Pryor: detective who'll survive for the *SUNRISE* sequel)



Lisa Comshaw

UPDATE OF A 32-YEAR-OLD "EROTIC THRILLER" VET: SHE'S LESS THAN TICKLED TO BOND WITH BETTIE PAGE'S KINK.

BY CRAIG REID

Four years ago, Lisa Comshaw's *FF* profile faded-out on a cliffhanger. The impetus that fueled her career was just starting to decline...

Optionally functioning as an "erotic thriller empress" and B-movie diva, Comshaw was nailing roles in a string of freshly-baked, low-budget quickies that—even before they cooled—were packaged and stored on video shelves. Never mind that the product was pretty much T&A-driven: "My debut film was a horror movie called *LUKAS CHILD*, it was about a monster that eats starlets who are held captive in a dungeon. Doing nudity didn't bother me, the dialogue bothered me. I didn't really know what the hell I was doing. I didn't know how to memorize so, when I was trying to memorize the words, I was sweating bullets. The nudity was easy."

Back in '93, the video market was just beginning to recede from its burgeoning business. And, suddenly, someone turned-off the baking factory's pilot light. "It's a tough time for starlets who leaned on the direct-to-video movies," says indie producer Kevin Summerfield (*GAME OF PLEASURE*). "Distributors have bought into a 'quality over quan-



Comshaw vs. an ALIEN SEX SUCKER, shot in '97. "I'm nice, not evil. They don't want my personality to come out in these roles."

tity' judgement call. Cheap erotic thrillers and crummy horror films have been kicked out of the U.S. mainstream."

The revenues were already dwindling the last time we talked to Comshaw, who has just wrapped something called *DARK RED*. "That what it was titled in '94," giggles the hazel-eyed beauty. "But now it's *FATAL PASSION*. It still hasn't been released in America yet because the producers drew-up a lawsuit against with the director which means, as I understand it, that you can't get E.N.O. insurance for American distribution. The producers put their life savings into the film but everything blew up. I thought it was a rushed project. I wished we had more time for coverage but, with low-budget films, you just grab your two shots whenever you can and turn it on. You get behind schedule, and they start ripping out script pages."

So how does a starlet, sans support from a crippling industry, support herself? "Well, sometimes I'm Lisa Comshaw. But I've also developed pseudonyms like *Tori Sinclair*, *Lisa Sutton* and *Pauna*." So how does Comshaw profit from this schizophrenic scenario?

Tori Sinclair: "I use my real name, Lisa Comshaw, for acting assignments. But, for my production company, I perform as *Tori*



"I'm a femme fatale, completely. But I think I have a lot of humor. I can be very sexy and I'm naturally funny. I can do one-liners. Nevertheless, I just can't find a film where they let me go a little bit and not just cast me as a bitch."



"Yes, I'm 32," says Gershon, erotic thriller diva (**PATAL PASSION**, **MIDNIGHT COMMISSIONS**, **HOUSEWIFE FROM HELL**). "It doesn't bother me. I'm not uncomfortable with my age. In the way I am, I see that it's time for changes."



Sinclair. You're the more erotic name that people know me by. So why fight it? Film producers know that I have done the erotic stuff, they have seen me on the Playboy channel. And fans address me by any one of my alternate names. I have nothing to hide."

Whoops, slow down...A production company?

"It's called Lasting Effects Entertainment. What we're trying to do is produce a higher quality of erotic videos. I know there's already a lot of stuff out there in mall order but it's really schlocky. There aren't any story lines! So even though what we are doing is highly erotic, we add some grit to it. Our vignettes include *Lady in the House* and *Hollywood Starlets Exposed*. I just surmised, 'If I'm going to do anything erotic'—after all, I've been doing it for a long time—I'm going to do it on my own.' I basically wanted to be the female producer of this erotic stuff, because we women know what men want—(slyly chuckles)—I've done it for years."

She's credited as *Fawna* for bondage-related scenes. As the next millennium's Bette Page, Ms. Comshaw's indecible trademark is the feather. It seems the fetish that renders big bucks is tickling, which practitioners describe as "the civil torment." *Fawna*, stripped down to her birthday suit, has been routinely trussed and literally tickled to near-death in a profusion of videos. For some nebulous reason, the fetish is often hybridized with the horror genre, what with DR. TICKLESTEIN, FEATHERFACE, COUNT TICKULA (w/ Julia Parson) and FRANKENTICKLE, the latter featuring Comshaw/*Fawna*. She bursts into a roar of laughter when I allude to the production...

"These videos are produced by Tony Sinclair, and he did a very killer 'Frankenstein' set. The bottom line is, when you're doing this sort of thing, you think to yourself, 'Go ahead, this is

LISA COMSHAW

"I'm an old lady in this town. Sometimes I hear myself say, 'Jesus Christ, I'm 32 and still looking for movies.' So I'm a producer & I'll do a goddamn better job than most male producers."



Comshaw's curves cooked in *CARIBBEAN KILL* (70). Shot in Mexico, the film is costarring as an Andy Sideris clone. "I wanted my character to be badass."

what you're doing today for your money.' When you're young, it's this sort of stuff you do between films to pay the bills. You'd be surprised how many people are out there who'll do this sort of thing. For my next erotic video, I put an ad in a magazine, it was a casting call for actors and actresses, between 25 to 35-years-old, who'll do nudity. You wouldn't believe the amount of head shots that I got! And as I'm receiving these things, I realize there's serious competition, to be in a film, even

at this level. I mean, no wonder one does these 'kittle torture' videos; otherwise, one would starve. This realization scares me."

Back to the *Lisa Comshaw* billing: It's not that she's been ostracized from the B-film industry on the contrary, Comshaw has been grinding 'em out! "There was a neat little gig for me in Surrender Cinema's *EROTIC HOUSE OF WAX*," explains the starlet. "I had only one little love scene with two girls. They were wax statues that came

to life after I put this amulet around their necks. In *WHITE CARGO*, a film with Shannon Tweed, I'm a hard-edged chick who's running a mobster organization. I actually got to keep my clothes on throughout the whole movie..."

I interject the hoary comshaw line, "Is that good or bad?" Ha!

Comshaw smiles and shrugs. "It's always nice to keep my clothes on. I don't mind nudity, so long as it makes sense. I also did *CARIBBEAN KILL* with David Naughton [*AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON*]. I just can't seem to find a film where I'm not a total bitch, so I told the director, 'Although my character is evil, she is still a woman and should have a soft side.' But he wouldn't let me play 'soft' anytime during the entire film. Instead, my character beats the shit out of this guy in bed. Then I smoke a cigar. So it's kind of phony. I was the ultimate bitch and wore some great clothes."

So what's in the future for a gorgeous starlet who's over 30? "My partner, Scott Sheldon, has written a project titled *VICIOUS CIRCLE*. It's a metaphor for the cycle that actresses get pulled into. The whole fetish and erotic thing is just like that. It will eventually kill me as an actress. Without Scott doing that film and giving me the lead, and really working with me on that part...let's just say that may be my only saving chance for me in this business."

"I am 32 years old. I am an old lady in this town [Hollywood], and it doesn't bother me at all. I am not uncomfortable with my age. I know it's time to make changes. But sometimes, I hear myself say, 'Jesus Christ, it's so scary—what am I doing here? I'm 32 and still looking for movies.' It's nuts. That's why I started to do erotic videos. I figure that I could become a producer and do a goddamn hotter job than most male producers out here." □

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CHARLIZE THERON

(continued from page 4)

you all the feathers you need to fly. And he trusted me with a very important character and I thank him for that. I had dreams in probably the way Mary Ann would have had dreams. That was pretty funny. She stayed with me for a long time. It's hard and yet very rewarding and kind of fun because I got to be Mary Ann for six months. I go to that dark place, and return very safely."

Theron adds New York's inclement winter climate as one "negative" during the shoot ("I'm tropical. My body just didn't want to function"). more than compensatory was the rapport with her co-stars, whom she describes as "phenomenal. I loved working with Keanu. His presence is just beautiful in this film. I loved what we had together. And the same with Al Pacino. Al, to me, can just never be bad. He does it with such conviction that he could fool me any day. He's fearless, he takes risks, he gambles. Sometimes he loses, but he does it with such conviction that he's always good because he constantly does it with his heart. I think that comes with time, experience and living life a lot longer than I have—and that makes him the unique actor who portrays these unique characters for us."

Like any self-respecting, cautionary Faustian tale, **THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE** has a moral: "The film wants you to see that humans do things for reasons they can't explain. It's about temptation, seduction, vanity, but the sin of life. But the temptation is the one that gets to me because that follows you down the street every single day. Nobody puts a gun to your head and says, 'You have to make this choice.' You always have a choice. We always think the grass is greener on the other side. The movie gives you the opportunity to see what happens if you get to make the choice twice. I think what the movie is trying to say is that doesn't happen in real life. It makes you want to think twice about your decisions in life, what you truly want and what's really important to you. I am very proud of how the film turned out, I truly am."

Lately, she's made the transition from Beelzebub to a big

ape. Upon wrapping our interview, Theron moved to a sound stage for post-production on **MIGHTY JOE YOUNG**, a remake of the 1949 fantasy classic.

KISS ME DEADLY

(continued from page 3)

gle of Velda helping Hammer across the beach, close-ups of them shot in front of a peacock screen of the "burning beach house" model. Finally, they reach the water's edge and turn to look the running time of the revisionist **END** title, that had frozen on the final, flickering image of the infirmary, was expanded—back to the **CG** original release—for superimposition over a drenched Hammer and Velda. So why was this scene trimmed for post-1965 screenings? So why, for over two decades, were audiences deceived into thinking that Velda and Hammer didn't survive the blast? Someone suggested the deletion could have been a vault guard's idea of a better version. But that's a long shot. Some careless negative handling and a botched repair job is a likelier story.

KISS ME DEADLY is restored. A new print debuted at the Los Angeles County Art Museum. MGM/UA's publicists dispatched the news: Martin Scorsese and Bertrand Tavernier responded with letters. One journalist asked me if the restored ending was "better" than the shorted version's fade-out. Perhaps the presumed demise of Hammer and Velda sustained more shock. But it's equally impacting for a wounded Hammer to survive, thus witnessing what his self-centered monomania has wrought. So which ending is darker, adhering more closely to the original, macabre angle of film noir? The more practical inquiry is, "Would Aldrich have preferred his original ending?" That's a no-brainer and good enough reason for the restoration.

THE LAST PIN-UP

(continued from page 3)

go sneaking with us tomorrow?" To my amazement, she smiled and said, "I'd love to! What time?"

The rest is history. We packed some extra sneaking gear, picked up Bettie, and took her to Lauderdale-By-the-Sea where the water was calm and clear. She took to the water with ease. When we reached the coral reef, about 400 yards offshore, schools of

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QUINN-TESSANTIAL "BOND GIRL"

Regarding the women who qualified for Mark Altman's survey, "James Bond/50 Sexiest Females" (9/8): is Altman ranking the actresses or the characters they portrayed?

The reason I ask? To be honest, from the time I was 10 years old—when I first saw her in **SOMEWHERE IN TIME**—I thought Jane Seymour was the most beautiful and talented actress to grace the cinema, let alone a James Bond movie (she was debauched when I turned 18 and caught my first glimpse of Brinke Stevens). That being said, my favorite female character, from any 007 movie, has always been the delectable SPECTRE assassin Fiona Volpe, played by Luciana Paluzzi in **THUNDERBALL**. But why was the appealing Seymour, cast in **LIVE AND LET DIE**, stuck with such a boring heroine like Solitaire?

Solitaire's lack of appeal certainly isn't Jane Seymour's fault. The blame should go to director Guy Hamilton and screenwriter Tom Mankiewicz. Altman quotes Mankiewicz as saying that Seymour was "too smart" and is "the type of girl you want to be home to mother, as opposed to a Bond girl who really knows her way around." I suspect the screenwriter is confusing Seymour with her bland DR. QUINN counterpart.

As anyone who had seen her performances in **EAST OF EDEN** and **PREYING MANTIS** would attest, Seymour can play predatory femme fatales with the best of 'em: in both of the aforementioned roles, she cooed sinister sex appeal. Had Mankiewicz written Solitaire as a girl who "knew her way around"—and not as an idiot who spends the entire movie screaming and being rescued by Bond—Seymour wouldn't have played the character with such nuance.

Although he scripted some of the finest one-liners in the history of the Bond series, Mankiewicz seemed to have trouble developing interesting female characters. Considering he co-wrote **DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER** & **MAN WITH**

THE GOLDEN GUN—each burdened with annoying bimbos, respectively Tiffany Case and Mary Goodnight—Mankiewicz should be thankful that Seymour's acting talent saved Solitaire from being equally pathetic. After all, Jill St. John ("Case") and Britt Ekland ("Goodnight") possess the dramatic range of a piece of cardboard, and weren't capable of giving at least a little substance to poorly scripted characters as Seymour did with Solitaire.

Joseph Holmes
Blytheburg, AL

The most compassionate albeit grievous omission in the "Bond/50 Sexiest" is Cassandra Harris ("Lol" in **FOR YOUR EYES ONLY**, '81). Harris—the late wife of Pierce Brosnan—was the ultimate femme fatale: stricken with ovarian cancer, she passed away—all too prematurely—in 1991.

Maxwell Collinson
Reedley, CA

[We regret the oversight.]

Add my vote to Mark Altman's choice of Athena Massey as one of the "Top Five Women Who've Never Been Bond Girls, But Should Be." Add the following to the list: Jennifer Lopez, Barbara Crampton, Alexander Keith, Cameron Diaz, Karina Lombard, Lydia Denier, Shari Belafonte and Venessa Taylor.

Ray Myles
Hampstead, NC

NIP IT IN THE BUD

First, let me admit that I am not a fan of your magazine. Sorry, if I want to see a pair of big breasts, I'd just take my shirt off and stand in front of a mirror. But I just had to pick-up the 66 issue because of the interview with KENA's Hudson Leach. I have to say that I wasn't the least bit disappointed. I have read many facts about Hudson but I feel your article was very candid and enlightening. I didn't realize Hudson was so adventurous! This is a woman with real "girl power"! Thank you very much for the interview with Hudson. She's going to be a major star



Venessa Taylor (6/3 & 6/7) the readers' choice as a "Bond girl." The actress recently won joint **FEMALEN 1 & 2's** *Zalman King* diva.

on Tuesday, Mark my words! Linda
Via e-mail

[Jennifer Haas, FF staffer, replies: "My summarization of your letter can be abridged to a couple of observations. First, I'm glad that you enjoyed our Leak profile. Second, whatever you do in front of your mirror is your own business—and I'll thank you to keep it to yourself. Now, do me a favor? Please clarify your correlation between our magazine and "big breasts." Excepting this issue's spread on Russ Meyer's musclemen, are routinely profile actresses who—gauging your own self-description—are much less bosomy than yourself. If you prefer femmes fatales—i.e., women confident with their own sexuality—check us out. If you want huge breasts, buy a copy of Jugs. Or look into a mirror!"]

THE WEB

Any word who will be cast in the **BLACK WIDOW** television series?

Mark Gaheri
Madison Heights, Virginia

[Tracy Scoggins originally approved the title role, but opted to replace Claudia Christian in **BABYLON 5's** final season. We'll keep you posted.]

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